

THE PRESBYTERY AS ORGAN OF CHURCH LIFE AND GOVERNMENT
IN AMERICAN PRESBYTERIANISM, 1706-1788

by

Boyd S. Schlenther



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ABSTRACT OF THESIS

Name of Candidate Boyd S. Schlenther
Address.....
Degree Ph.D. Date 15 January 1965
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The purpose of this thesis is to trace the various stages in the development of polity within the main body of American Presbyterianism, from the founding of the first Presbytery to the formation of the first General Assembly. This is done primarily by an examination of the minutes of the various judicatories, but there is also the attempt to elaborate the development as it centered in certain personalities within the church.

Because of the lack of a systematic study of the records of the church courts during this period, there has been, in the past, a general misunderstanding of the nature of ecclesiastical authority exercised by the Presbyterian Church in colonial America. One view has believed that church organization underwent very little, if any, adaptation from Old World forms; on the other hand, a second view has supposed that the church's government was based, principally, on a modified voluntary Congregationalism.

The first chapter is introductory in intent and sets forth points of difference between Presbyterianism and Congregationalism in the colonies during the seventeenth-century--differences significant enough to produce open rupture and separation. This disagreement was rooted in basically opposed doctrines of the Church. The second chapter attempts to show that the framers and supporters of the original Presbytery were self-consciously Presbyterians, but were, at the same time, indued with a liberality of spirit which was demanded of the church if it were to witness faithfully and effectively to a new world.

The subsequent chapters examine the development of presbyteries and synods, revealing the determinative role played by these 'higher' judicatures in the life and expansion of the denomination. A careful investigation is made into the major causes of the Old Side-New Side schism, which took place during the height of the revival movement. Here it is argued that, especially in the realm of polity, the Old Side men were attempting to hold the church to the general course which had been charted from the beginnings, though, in the end, they reacted unjustly toward the revivalists.

General exception is taken to one particular recent writer, since, while rightly emphasizing the new American spirit at work within the church, he wrongly believes that this necessitated a general abandonment of older principles of Presbyterian church government. On the contrary, it is concluded, both from the

life and order of the presbyteries and the form of polity which finally was adopted, that the genius of American Presbyterianism lay in its utilization of a creative new outlook in the context of rather closely-defined patterns of church organization. While it was free from 'foreign' control, colonial Presbyterianism, from its beginning, always looked to the Church of Scotland as its paramount ideal for polity.

By citing numerous cases of consistorial action in each period of eighteenth-century colonial church life it is concluded that presbyteries and synods were authoritative church courts in the fullest sense and that Congregationalist principles and practices could never find a home within the denomination. The Presbyterian approach to ecclesiology was determined by an underlying doctrine of the universality of the Church; therefore, the church demonstrated not only that it had liberality of outlook, but also perspective. That perspective was a polity derived from Westminster and Scotland, and its implementation produced a system which had and exercised authority, both over ministers and local congregations.

It is shown that in practice the most vital ecclesiastical concerns were supervised by area presbyteries. In its 1788 Constitution the church made explicit that these courts were the primary organs of American Presbyterianism's life and government.

P R E F A C E

Protestantism in America is heir to British Christianity's deep concern with and involvement in the question of church polity. This has been true for American Presbyterianism as much as for any church. Thrust far from their homeland, British Presbyterians were forced to hammer and shape a new image for a native church, but it is most important to ask whether in so doing they used old forms of organization as a basis, or if entirely new ones were adopted.

There is a real problem in attempting to speak of 'Presbyterianism' in the colonies prior to the eighteenth-century. This stems from the difficulty in distinguishing between Presbyterianism and Congregationalism at the level of the local church. It is evident that seventeenth-century Puritanism should be classified as predominantly Congregationalist, since--a crucial point--an authoritative area judicatory, a 'presbytery', was absent. Without this, Presbyterianism could be nothing more than a tendency.

But as the colonies entered the new century a monumental shift took place in colonial life. The center of British interest turned to the 'Middle Colonies': New York, the Jerseys, Pennsylvania, Maryland, and Delaware, and rather rapidly they became the main-spring of colonial life. It was here that Presbyterianism was born. It is here that we will devote the main body of our study, for the eighteenth-century was the truly formative period of American Presbyterianism.

It is the story of the development of polity within the 'higher' judicatories of the church from 1706-1788. 1706 marks the formation of the first American presbytery, under the leadership of Francis Makemie. The story of ecclesiastical authority and supervision within the Presbyterian Church in America from that time until the adoption of the Church's official polity in 1788 provides a fruitful and necessary area of research.

The very structure of the church during this period requires that attention be given to the Synod formed in 1717, because, in reality, this Synod (both divided by

schism and united again) was at several points a 'presbytery of the whole'. The presbyteries' relation to the Synod, therefore, was an ill-defined one which led to strained feelings and even broken witness.

This study deals with a basic problem. A clearer understanding of the authority of the 'higher' courts (presbyteries and synods) of this period is called for because of a battle within American Presbyterianism which has been waged, rather futilely, for a century and a quarter. With this thesis the debate continues. On the one hand, Presbyterianism in America from 1706 onward has been seen as a replica of the Church of Scotland. On the other, there is a smaller body of opinion which believes that one must have keen eyesight to be able to distinguish between Presbyterianism and Congregationalism in the period from 1706-1788.

The first view fails to take into consideration the necessary native conditions that must affect any form of organization. It forgets that the New World demanded a new tolerance. The second view mistakes tolerance for capitulation, imagining that the absence of rancor in the Presbyterian Church's relations with Congregationalists during the eighteenth-century actually meant that Presbyterians were Congregationally-orientated. More serious, this second interpretation ignores the authority and power exercised by presbyteries (and synods) during the formative period and, therefore, supposes that the church followed no basic principles in the shaping of its organizational life.

It is evident that the Presbyterian Church in America, being founded officially by no European church or churches, was able to form its polity to fit the pressures of the time; it demonstrated the ability to shift its sails to changing winds of development, yet we shall see that it was not without reason that the church was called "Presbyterian". While older notions of the 'Divine right of presbyteries' had faded into history and the 'founding fathers' of American Presbyterianism did not adopt a fully-developed written polity for over eighty years, the records will make absolutely clear that American Presbyterians were operating on the assumption

that their form of government was derived from that church which was the fullest expression of Presbyterianism in the English-speaking world of the time: the Church of Scotland.

It is necessary, then, to dismiss the extremists on both sides of the 'basis of American Presbyterian polity' question and to let the minutes of judicatories and other related records and witnesses, themselves, lead us to a re-evaluation of the role played by church authority during the period. It will appear that the genius of American Presbyterianism was its ability to incorporate the spirit of the New World within the framework of a polity largely derived from Old World forms.

And now my debts. They are legion. The list of "Location Symbols" on page 397 removes the necessity of detailed thanksgivings in some instances. To the staffs of all these libraries and depositories I stand committed. The active help from each was overwhelming, and many times I was called back from the beginnings of a fruitless wandering by a discerning librarian. My thanks must go in general to several other institutions not listed in the 'Symbols'. I feel guilty for making no detailed mention of such assistance, and I only plead that my conscience will not let me compound my guilt by padding the bibliography in order to give recognition to a number of most helpful people.

But, in particular, I must name names and give thanks to: Mr Robert Christie of the University of Edinburgh for his comprehensive knowledge of the university's library, but not less important, for his buoyant disposition on countless drab days; Mr J.T. Darling and Mr M.A. Saunders of the Presbyterian Historical Society of England for the invaluable service of making available to me their files of the American Journal of Presbyterian History; Dr James C. Corson for the rare privilege of making reference to the extensive library of Sir Walter Scott at Abbotsford. And any Edinburgh Divine would have to underline and italicize his dependence upon and gratitude to Dr J.A. Lamb and the able staff of the New College library.

The research has been aided considerably by the discovery of certain documents

in the Wodrow Collection, deposited in the National Library of Scotland, some of which are included as appendices. For their most discerning assistance I am indebted to Dr E.F.D. Roberts, Mr Julian Russell, and Dr Ian Cunningham.

I have benefited immeasurably from the modern revolution in microfilm and photostatic services. Because of this, research for the thesis has been able to lean primarily on original source materials. My deep gratitude in this area goes to the Historical Foundation of the Presbyterian and Reformed Churches, at Montreat, North Carolina, and its Executive Director, Dr T.H. Spence, Jr. and to Dr Connolly C. Gambel, Jr. of Union Theological Seminary in Richmond, Virginia. Most of all, in this field, I have been dependent upon The Presbyterian Historical Society in Philadelphia. For the careful and extensive service and encouragement I have received from Dr James Hastings Nichols and Mr William B. Miller, I am completely indebted. Also, Miss Ann Young of the Map Room of the National Library has rendered invaluable service, not only by the provision of a microfilm projector, but also by her expert cartographical help.

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The development of American Presbyterian polity is a story that, to our detriment, has been misunderstood in the past. How it should be understood rightly in the present is the burden of this thesis.

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ABBREVIATIONS

- JPH :Journal of Presbyterian History (formerly, Journal of the Presbyterian Historical Society). Published by the Presbyterian Historical Society of the United Presbyterian Church in the United States of America. Volumes I-XLII, 1901-1964.
- Records :Records of the Presbyterian Church in the United States of America. Philadelphia, 1841. (This is a special printing, and the pagination is the same as in the 1901 edition.)
- WL :Wodrow Manuscript Letters. National Library of Scotland, Edinburgh.

For my dear wife:

ELIZABETH:

Breadwinner, Proofreader, Cheerleader

C O N T E N T S

	<u>Page</u>
PREFACE	ii
CONTENTS	viii
CHAPTER ONE: Conditions prior to the formation of the original Presbytery	1
A. Congregationalist and Presbyterian doctrines of the Church	1
B. An early similarity: the ruling eldership	3
C. The growing separation	6
1. The writing of James Noyes	
2. Legal pressure for Presbyterianism	
3. The question of baptism	
4. Adoption of ecclesiastical polities	
D. Conclusions	12
CHAPTER TWO: The Formation of the original Presbytery	14
A. The leadership of Francis Makemie	14
B. Arguments regarding the Nature and Constitution of the original Presbytery	24
C. Conclusions	45
CHAPTER THREE: The Authority of the original Presbytery	48
A. The Presbytery's use of ruling elders	49
B. The Presbytery's control of ministers	52
C. The Presbytery's control of congregations	61
D. The Presbytery's use of committees	66
E. Conclusions	70
CHAPTER FOUR: The Polity of the Synod of Philadelphia, 1717-1740	72
A. A Case of mistaken identity: the relation of the authority of the Synod to its presbyteries	73
1. The Synod's control of ministers	
a. Ordination	
b. Discipline	
c. Admission	
d. Settlement in and dismissal from pastoral charges	
e. Censorship	
2. The Synod's control of congregations	
a. Parish boundaries and membership in presbyteries	
b. Supplies	
c. Collections	
d. Discipline	

	<u>Page</u>
B. The Synod's internal organization	100
1. More power to the presbyteries	
2. The Commission	
3. The Synod's use of committees	
4. The Synod's Fund	
5. Schools	
6. The Synod's use of ruling elders	
C. Conclusions	110
CHAPTER FIVE: The Order and Work of the Presbyteries, 1717-1740	112
A. The presbyteries' control of ministers	112
1. Admission	
2. Trials for ordination	
3. Ordination	
4. Installation	
5. Dismissal	
6. Discipline	
B. The presbyteries' control of congregations	128
1. Visitation	
2. Supplies	
3. Calls	
4. New churches and church boundaries	
5. Collections	
6. Discipline	
C. The presbyteries' internal organization	146
1. Commissions and committees	
2. Meetings	
D. Relations among the presbyteries	151
E. Conclusions	154
CHAPTER SIX: Polity and the Old Side-New Side Controversy	156
A. Background of the controversy	156
1. Subscription	
2. 'Intrusion'	
3. Examination of candidates	
4. Tennent's sermon	

B. Polity and the schism

1. Thomson's overture
2. Cross' "protestation"
3. Thomson vs. Tennent
4. Formation of the "Conjunct Presbyteries" and the Synod of New York

C. Conclusions

205

CHAPTER SEVEN: The Synods of Philadelphia and New York, 1745-1758

207

A. A comparison of the polities

207

1. Meetings
2. Use of Commissions and committees
3. Control of ministers
4. Control of congregations
5. Control of presbyteries
6. Collections and Funds
7. Education

B. The order and work of the presbyteries

232

1. Authority exercised over Ministers
 - a. Trials for ordination
 - b. Ordination and installation
 - c. Dismissal
 - d. Discipline
2. Authority exercised over congregations
 - a. Calls
 - b. Care of ministers
 - c. Supplies
 - d. Discipline
3. Internal organization of the presbyteries
 - a. Commissions and committees
 - b. Meetings
4. Relations among the presbyteries

C. Conclusions

265

CHAPTER EIGHT: Movement Toward Maturity, 1758-1788

268

A. Polity at the reunion

268

B. Internal organization of the judicatories

271

1. Synod	
a. The Commission and committees	
b. Rules of procedure	
c. Attendance	
2. Presbyteries	
a. Committees	
b. Procedure	
C. Formation and reception of presbyteries	281
D. Control of ministers and candidates	286
1. Reception	
2. Examination of candidates	
a. Trials	
b. Educational requirements	
c. Orderly care	
d. Licensure, ordination, and installation	
e. Discipline	
f. Dismissal	
E. Control of congregations	311
1. Calls	
2. Discipline	
3. Uniting and transfer	
4. Local sessions	
5. "Christian education"	
6. Church finances	
a. Collections	
b. Ministerial support	
c. Church property	
7. Pastoral Letters	
F. New roles for ruling elders	328
G. The "Model polity"	330
H. Conclusions	333
CHAPTER NINE: The Formation of "The Presbyterian Church in the United States of America"	335
A. The preparations	335
B. The basis of the American church's government	337

C. A comparison of the American and Westminster plans for church government	339
1. Format	
2. Nature of the Church	
3. Church officers	
4. Authority of church judicatories	
a. Local sessions	
b. Presbyteries	
c. Synods and the General Assembly	
D. Conclusions	351
CONCLUSION	353
APPENDIX I. The organizations of the Dutch Reformed and Anglican Churches in Colonial America	355
A. The Dutch Reformed Church	355
B. The Anglican Church	358
C. Conclusions	360
APPENDIX II. A letter from James Anderson and a representation to the Presbytery of Long Island	362
A. A letter from James Anderson	363
B. "A Representation of the case betwix the presbyterian church of New York & Dr. Nicoll, as represented to The Revd Presbytery hold att Jamaica on Long Island May 18th 1726 by ye Representatives of sd Church"	365
APPENDIX III. A letter of William Steward	388
APPENDIX IV. An index of Volume XXII of the Wodrow Letters	390
APPENDIX V. Maps	Back-cover pocket
Map 1: The original Presbytery, 1706	
Map 2: The Synod of Philadelphia, 1717	
Map 3: The Synod of Philadelphia, 1740	
Map 4: The Synod of Philadelphia, 1746	
Map 5: The Synod of New York, 1746	
Map 6: The Synod of New York and Philadelphia, 1761	
Map 7: The General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church in the United States of America, 1788	
BIBLIOGRAPHY	396

CHAPTER ONE

Conditions prior to the formation of the original Presbytery

The Puritan and Pilgrim Fathers landed in the New World with strong Calvinistic convictions in theology, but with diverse views of the nature of church government. Congregationalism and Presbyterianism struggled for dominance in the realm of polity, both drawing ammunition from their British heritages. But the conflict went much deeper than mere administrative form; it turned on differing doctrines of the Church.

A. Congregationalist and Presbyterian doctrines of the Church

Congregationalism saw the Church completely formed in any given local congregation, for there were lodged all the functions, orders, and signs of the Body of Christ. To Presbyterianism, on the other hand, the Church was catholic. The full Church could not be contained in any given denomination, let alone any given congregation. This had implications for church membership to the Presbyterian, for God alone knew the elect, and the Presbyterian believed that the Church could not and should not stipulate any condition for Church membership except that a person be able to give a credible profession of his faith in Christ. Yet the Congregationalist believed that a prospective member should be examined very closely regarding his motives and be required to sign an obligation ("Church Covenant") to a particular congregation.

Moreover, the ministry was seen in differing lights. Rigid Congregationalism insisted that when a minister was ordained he should be ordained only for work in one particular congregation. If he left this group his ordination became void, and it was necessary for him to be 're-ordained' each time he took up a new charge. The Presbyterian understanding of the Church precluded such a possibility and produced a radically different concept of the ministry. When a minister was ordained it was not to the ministry of one particular local congregation, nor even into the 'Presbyterian ministry', but into the ministry of the One, Holy,

Universal Church. The Presbyterian's ordination was not performed by church members, but by other ministers, to whom the keys of the Kingdom had been given by the authority and commission of Christ. The act of ordination was into the Universal Church, and since a number of ministers, acting corporately, would represent that universality, ordination properly belonged to them. Ministers were ordained for life and were never 're-ordained' when entering a new field of service.

Congregationalism believed that local church members could ordain their own minister and therefore showed its disagreement with Presbyterianism on the ownership of the "Keys". If the Presbyterian believed that Christ had given the keys of the Kingdom to church officers, the Congregationalist believed just as firmly that they had been placed in the hands of church members in general. Since, to the Congregationalist, the Church was complete in its local manifestation, it could exist, ideally, without ministers or other officers. For utilitarian reasons, of course, each church could choose a minister, teacher, and lay leaders, but as far as church order was concerned these officers would be responsible to the whole body of members. Since the keys had been placed in the hands of church members, they alone could use them to lock and unlock the privileges of the Church; it was not a responsibility that could be delegated. But it was consistent with the Presbyterian's view of the Church for admission to membership to be supervised by a few.

To this end, the Presbyterian believed, God had instituted ruling elders. They were appointed by divine commission, but chosen by members of a congregation, whom the elders would represent. Therefore, while the minister represented the universal Church to the members of a local congregation and was God's messenger, he was not to be 'dictatorial', but to work closely with the elders, who would assist him in his divine commission.

The Sacraments would be understood somewhat differently in such a climate. Congregationalists would administer Baptism and the Lord's Supper only to those

who were in "Covenant" with the particular church and who had gone through whatever was thought necessary by that congregation for them to be in full membership and good standing. Curiously, while Congregationalists demanded re-ordination of their ministers, they did not require re-Baptism of their members; but if Baptism was not seen as Baptism into a particular congregation, it was nevertheless looked upon as Baptism into the Church as the Church was conceived by the members of a local group. Therefore, only children of members in good standing with the given congregation were eligible to receive this Sacrament. In the same way, the Lord's Table was so completely 'fenced' that in the end only a handful, the 'true' members of the congregation, would partake of this Sacrament.

To Presbyterians Baptism was an act of Christian initiation, by and for the whole Church. When the Lord's Supper was celebrated, a Presbyterian congregation often would 'overflow' because of the number of communicants, thus forcing these festival meals out-of-doors. The Presbyterian, through his minister and ruling elders, would exclude the grossly immoral from the Table, but he would presume to go no farther. He would not attempt to determine the 'true members' of the Body.

These ecclesiological differences carried strong overtones for the organizational life of Reformed Christianity in early America. At first, common difficulties in the New World minimized divergencies; indeed, the concepts were not always rigidly held, and there was a fair amount of admixture of the two viewpoints. But as the colonies became more settled and definite forms were demanded, the two groups began to separate.

B. An early similarity: the ruling eldership

The key difference in the practical applications of Presbyterian and Congregationalist polities lay in the question of whether or not and to what extent church government should be representative; yet in the early colonial church, Congregationalism adopted certain Presbyterian tendencies. The churches were never carried to the logical extreme of pure Independency, since they were willing

to elect congregational elders.

Upon leaving England, the Puritans had a deep prejudice against Independency as it was taught in its thorough-going form by Robert Browne, and so tended toward "Barrowism", which placed a degree of power in the ruling eldership.¹ So also, when the Pilgrims landed at Plymouth, even though they had no ordained minister, there was a ruling elder in the group. John Robinson, who had ministered to the people during their stay in Holland, claimed that his organization at Leyden conformed to the polity of the French Church.² In fact, the English exiles in Holland formed a classis in the early 1620's which looked for all appearances like a Dutch Reformed classis and which, to an extent, exercised many of the same functions and powers.³

This background made many of the early churches sympathetic to the formation of "congregational presbyteries"--ruling elders in the local church who would function as a disciplinary court, to whatever degree would be thought wise by the particular membership. At Jamestown, in 1611, Alexander Whitaker organized a Puritan church with a congregational presbytery composed of four ruling elders,⁴ somewhat comparable to the Presbytery of Wandsworth in the England of the preceding century; and Thomas Weld wrote that the practice of local elderships was fairly

¹ Jackson, Samuel M. (ed.), Papers of the American Society of Church History (Second Series), Vol. I, New York, 1913, p. 36.

² Clarke, Walter I., "American Presbyterian Beginnings", JPH, XV, p. 331. Cf. Quick, John, Synodicon, London, 1692, p. xxx and Dez, Pierre, "Les Articles Polytiques de 1557 et les origines du régime synodal", Bulletin de la Société de l'Histoire du Protestantisme Français, January, 1957, p. 2, for descriptions of the responsibilities of a ruling elder in the French Church's polity.

³ Stearnes, Raymond P., Congregationalism in the Dutch Netherlands, Chicago, 1940, pp. 9-17.

⁴ Drury, Clifford, Four Hundred Years of World Presbyterian History, Berkeley, California, n.d., p. 869. Cf. Gardiner, John H., "The Beginnings of the Presbyterian Church in the Southern Colonies", JPH, XXXIV, pp. 37-38.

wide-spread in New England during the period prior to 1645.⁵ H.M. Dexter has called this "a Congregationalized Presbyterianism, or a Presbyterianized Congregationalism--which had its roots in the one system and its branches in the other; which was essentially Genevan within the local congregation, and essentially other outside of it".⁶ We must conclude, with McClurkin, that the New England congregations were "not wholly and completely Congregational, for they embodied a feature of Presbyterianism with[in their] organisation...in that they adopted the office of Elder".⁷

In spite of this early similarity to Presbyterian form, the eldership was far from well-established in colonial Calvinistic congregations, and actually it began to fall into disuse. This certainly, as Briggs suggests,⁸ was due to

⁵ Briggs, Charles A., American Presbyterianism, etc., Edinburgh, 1885, p. 96n.

⁶ Quoted in Loetscher, F.W., "Presbyterianism in Colonial New England," JPH, XI, pp. 86-87.

⁷ McClurkin, Paul T., "Presbyterianism in New England Congregationalism," JPH, XXXI, p.246. Both Slosser, Gaius J. (ed.), They Seek a Country, etc., New York, 1955, pp. 28-29 and Trinterud, Leonard J., The Forming of An American Tradition, etc., Philadelphia, 1949, p.21 say that the early New England congregations adopted the eldership as a concession to those who were presbyterian-inclined.

McClurkin footnoted the statement with this observation: "The office of Elder is essentially Presbyterian." When J.M. Ross, English lay-theologian and church historian, read McClurkin's article in JPH he responded with a personal letter, dated April 10, 1954. In it Ross says: "If I correctly understand you, the article suggests that the prevalence of the eldership in 17th-century New England Congregationalism was a sign of Presbyterian influence. I wonder, however, if that was really so. It was common ground among the earliest English Separatists (Barrowe, Greenwood, Johnson, etc.) that there should be elders in every congregation. The desirability of elders was asserted in Bradshaw's manifesto on behalf of the Puritans in 1605, referred to in Neele's History of the Puritans. Various later 17th-century Independents wrote commending the eldership, e.g. Owen, Goodwin, and Watts.....It seems to me...that the Congregational immigrants into New England in the early & middle 17th Century would quite naturally set up ruling elderships even if they were unaware that the Presbyterians had them too." (Letter used with permission of Mr. Ross.)

⁸ Briggs, op. cit., p. 96.

the lack of qualified men to fill the office, but even more basically because there was no unity of opinion among Congregationalists as to its fundamental necessity. When the use of elders began to pass, all the authority not assumed by a congregation as a whole fell upon the minister, and he and his congregation were left to struggle with church order. While there was a desire to distribute authority among the entire church membership rather than to concentrate it in a few,⁹ the absence of the eldership produced the tendency for authority to move into the hands of the pastor rather than into the hands of the congregation.

C. The growing separation

By the 1640's it became clear that those in the colonies who were orientated toward Presbyterianism would not be satisfied with a local eldership even if its use became consistent. Indeed, the 'Presbyterians' could not feel that they truly were Presbyterians, because of the lack of church authority beyond the local congregation. Their British heritage made it clear that the most distinctive element of Presbyterianism was just such control beyond particular churches--a representative court that would make concrete their notion of the broad catholicity of the Church. Agitation for such authority came from two New England quarters: the one theological, the other legal. In addition, the question of baptism drove a wedge between Congregationalist and Presbyterian elements.

1. The writing of James Noyes

James Noyes was a teacher in the Newbury, Massachusetts congregation who became a spokesman for Presbyterian government mainly through his writing. In Moses and Aaron he wrote: "Election by common members, is not essentiall to the constitution of Elders....In that I have formerly supposed popular election so much necessary and imposition of hands for little necessity, I now humbly impute it to my weaknesse in Judgement, as well as to my education, amongst such as were for the

⁹ Loetscher, op.cit., p. 91.

congregational way." ¹⁰

He argues in The Temple measured that the local "Presbyterie" has the power to suspend the whole church, if necessary, to avoid administering the "seals" to those who are unworthy: "Presbyters are not subject to the common members in censures of superiority. In Israel the Elders or magistrates were primitively elected by a Democratical power, and yet were not subject to a Democratical power once elected." ¹¹

As to the wider implications for representative polity which are here indicated, Noyes claims that ruling elders have the power to "order and act" in all congregations. He says:

....the Elders of two Churches have power to act in and over one Church, and one Elder (in the name of a Presbytery) may act in and over any Church (subordinate to that Presbytery) though it be not his own proper sphere..... Reformed Churches have generally consented some fixed form of consociation, Geneva hath governed by a combination of twenty Parishes in one Presbytery. ¹²

While Noyes' continued appeals for an authoritative polity met with no success, yet an articulate voice had been raised for Presbyterianism in the context of mid-seventeenth-century New England. ¹³

¹⁰ Quoted in Briggs, op. cit., p. xxv.

¹¹ Noyes, James, The Temple measured, etc., London, 1647, p. 34.

¹² Ibid., pp. 57-58.

¹³ In his book Hypocrisie Vnmasked Edward Winslow referred to Noyes' church at Newbury as being "in that way [i.e. Presbyterian]...so far as a single Congregation can bee exercised in it". Winslow well understood that a presbytery having supervision over more than one congregation was basic to Presbyterianism. He further related that several men from the Church of Scotland had written to New England, asking if they might be able to settle there and be permitted to practice presbyterian polity. "It was answered affirmatively [that] they might: and they sending over a Gentleman to take a view of some fit place.....[one] was shewed their Agent, which he well liked, and where wee have since four townes settled, and more may bee for ought I know, so that there they might have had a compleate Presbytery.... but meeting with manifold crosses....they gave over their intendments....". Winslow, a Congregationalist, appreciated the Presbyterian need for a "compleate Presbytery". Cf. Winslow, Edward, Hypocrisie Vnmasked, etc., London, 1646, pp. 99-100.

2. Legal pressure for Presbyterianism

When the Presbyterian-minded in New England heard of the developments at Westminster during the 1640's they moved into action. In 1646 a petition asking for the establishment of Presbyterian polity was presented to the General Court of Massachusetts,¹⁴ but was refused. The petitioners immediately prepared a case for the English Parliament, asking that that body establish Presbyterianism in New England. There might have been some real possibility of success, had it not been for the Cromwellian victory in 1647,¹⁵ for the Presbyterian-inclined were led in their attempts by influential British Presbyterians, anxious to extend the 'benefits' of the new national polity beyond the home country. Holmes says: "Several persons, arriving at Boston, attempted to establish presbyterian government, under the authority of the assembly of divines at Westminster...but they were baffled by the general court."¹⁶ These Presbyterian Puritans were striving for the continuation of the establishment of the Church of England, in its newly-presbyterianized form, and the Congregationalist Puritans wanted nothing of an established Church of England, no matter what its form. Local establishment, such as actually existed in New England, was quite acceptable, but the Congregationalists would fight the encroachment of the English Church at any cost.

The shortsightedness of the Presbyterians on this point is obvious. The legal establishment of a presbyterianized Church of England was the 'short-cut'

¹⁴ "A few persons of some influence in Massachusetts.....imagining that the parliament of England would establish the presbyterian form of church government only, presented a petition to the general court [of Massachusetts], to establish that form in this colony....[They] framed a bill of complaint... against the government of the colony, with the intention of presenting it to parliament; but the magistrates detected and suppressed the design." Holmes, Abiel, American Annals, etc., Vol. I, Cambridge, 1808, pp. 280-281.

¹⁵ McClurkin, op. cit., pp. 251-252. Cf. Funk, Henry D., "The Influence of the Presbyterian Church in Early American History," JPH, XII, p. 32.

¹⁶ Holmes, op. cit., p. 271.

to Presbyterianism in New England, but the Congregationalists responded as would be expected. Therefore, a reaction movement began toward a more independent form, especially in Massachusetts. The ruling eldership, now by conscious design, was used less and less, again showing that Congregationalism could easily dispense with it and that it had been an accommodation to Presbyterian influence. If the Presbyterian Puritans had not tried to force a Presbyterian establishment, a 'natural' movement toward their polity would probably have taken place in New England.

3. The question of baptism

The differing concepts of baptism that we have noted drove a further wedge between Congregationalists and Presbyterians. For example, Francis Doughty,¹⁷ who came in 1637 from Old England to New England and settled at Taunton, Massachusetts, maintained that baptism should be administered to all children of all baptized Christians. For this stand he was forced to leave New England for Long Island, later moving to Manhattan, thus becoming the first Presbyterian minister in what was to be New York City.

From 1644 until 1658 or 1659 Richard Denton ministered to a group that had separated from the congregation in Stamford, Connecticut and moved to Hempstead, Long Island. But even there Denton was faced with opposition from Congregationalists in his church who objected to his position on infant baptism. He ministered for a time to the group on Manhattan that Doughty had served, and in 1657 the Dutch Reformed pastors of Manhattan wrote to the Classis of Amsterdam: "They have also a Presbyterian preacher named Richard Denton, an honest, pious, and learned man. He hath in all things conformed to our church. The Independents of the place listen attentively to his preaching, but when he began to baptize the children of such parents as are not members of the church [i.e. congregation], they sometimes broke out of the church."¹⁸

¹⁷ Briggs, op. cit., pp. 100-101.

¹⁸ Quoted in Ibid., p. 102.

Several other ministers were faced with similar situations throughout the colonies. The question of baptism played a significant role in clarifying basic differences between Congregationalists and Presbyterians and underlined the need for the formation of a Presbyterian Church in America.

4. Adoption of ecclesiastical polities

In all these early events the Presbyterians had taken the offensive, the Congregationalists the defensive, and because of Presbyterian pressure Congregationalism found itself forced to attempt to systematize its position by formulating some basic standards of church government. Great diversity of practice had produced a state of affairs that had allowed the threatening Presbyterian protagonists to make inroads; therefore, a conference was called for 1648. This 'synod' adopted the "Cambridge Platform",¹⁹ receiving the brand-new Westminster Confession of Faith as its own, but devising its own form of polity. The adoption of the Westminster Confession was a strategic move, since it took away much suspicion in Britain about the orthodoxy of the Congregational "Way" in New England and perhaps helped to thwart an English Presbyterian intervention.

While the Cambridge Platform allowed for a certain amount of representative government, the actual seat of authority remained vague. Ruling elders were to serve as assistants to ministers, but a local group could form itself into a church without any officers whatever and exercise all church authority itself, if it so desired. Synods were to be advisory only and to have no binding authority or jurisdiction.

Because of civil difficulties the Congregational ministers of Massachusetts called, in 1679-1680, a synod at Savoy to strengthen church authority, since the loosely-organized polity of the Cambridge Platform had made the churches susceptible

¹⁹ Cf. Sweet, William W., Religion in Colonial America, New York, 1942, pp. 103-105.

to domination by the civil government. "The lukewarmness of Court and people in Massachusetts prevented such a step in the direction of Presbyterianism; but in Connecticut there was a strong movement in this direction." ²⁰

The closer sympathy of the Connecticut churches to Presbyterian forms produced the Synod of Saybrook in 1708, that adopted the "Savoy Confession" which had failed to gain acceptance in Massachusetts during the preceding generation. In addition, the Connecticut ministers produced fifteen articles of their own, entitled the "Saybrook Articles".

These articles stated that ruling elders were to have and to exercise power of church discipline in relation to all scandals and should seriously consider conferring with the ruling elders of other congregations in their area, in case of difficulty. Congregations were to be bound together in representative and authoritative "Consociations", and there were to be "Associations" which would meet at least twice a year to examine candidates for the ministry. ²¹

This synod would have taken a great step toward Presbyterianism if it also had not adopted the "Heads of Agreement". This was a wholly inadequate document which had been produced in London in 1691 in an attempt to bring about a union of the Congregationalists and Presbyterians there. The "Heads of Agreement" had failed in London because it leaned heavily toward Congregationalism: cooperation among congregations was strictly voluntary; matters such as re-ordination of ministers and the use of the ruling eldership were left completely to the choice and fancy of local churches. These articles pulled the Saybrook plan to the side of Independency, and in actual practice the system operated in the following years

²⁰ Jackson, op. cit., p. 38.

²¹ McClurkin, op. cit., p. 255. Cf. Sweet, op. cit., pp. 113-115. The Articles also provided for an annual General Association, for all the churches of Connecticut, to which delegates from the associations were to be sent.

on much the same basis as the old Congregationalism, the "Consociations...[being] little more than advisory bodies...[which] did not attempt to exercise the power of excommunication or [to] dominate the policies of the individual churches".²² Presbyterians could take little comfort in the new Connecticut forms.

Thus, by the beginning of the eighteenth-century, Presbyterianism had found no base of operation in the colonies, existing only as a tendency within congregations, and not itself a church. Radical action was urgently needed.

D. Conclusions

The most important question regarding the differences between Presbyterian and Congregational polity in colonial America stemmed from an understanding of the nature of the Church. While in the eyes of the Congregationalist the Church essentially was embodied in the local situation, the Presbyterian saw the Church manifest in a wider unity. The Congregationalist looked to the local congregation to see the complete Church and then, if necessary, broadened his view; the Presbyterian began from the universality of the Body of Christ, realizing that this must then be made concrete in given situations. Therefore, even the adopting of congregational elderships did not satisfy the Presbyterian's concept of the Church as a unity, rather than a combination of parts. An authoritative court, representing the totality of the Church to its given congregations and binding them in this oneness was absolutely necessary to Presbyterian thought.

If the Congregationalist agreed to the calling together of a church council it was only for the purpose of advice; consent was not to be required nor expected. Further, the council was only ad hoc; any organization outside the

²² McClurkin, op. cit., p. 256. One writer believes that "had not the Heads of Agreement served as counterweight against the Saybrook Articles, the drift toward Presbyterian polity would doubtless have been much faster". Smith, H.S., Handy, R.T., Loetscher, L.A., American Christianity, An Historical Interpretation with Representative Documents, Vol. I, New York, 1960, p. 225.

local congregation was 'additional' to the real Church, which was the local church. A council was purely an expedient.

The Presbyterian believed that God had appointed higher and lower corporate levels of the Church, each participating in the nature of the Church and each contributing to its wholeness. Within the completeness of the Body of Christ (of which the whole Presbyterian Church was just a part) each judicatory was to have its own area of authority and responsibility. The desire was for an ascending and descending system of church order, which in its totality would reflect the wholeness of the Universal Church of Christ.

Unfortunately, Presbyterians chose a wrong approach to realize their designs in seventeenth-century New England; but, in any case, New England was not fertile soil for the planting of Presbyterianism. In the colonies outside of New England, congregations also were formed which showed marks of Presbyterian influence, but beyond this nothing more can be said, since a Presbyterian Church in America did not exist. Congregationalism could find its fulfillment in the varying life of local churches, but Presbyterianism could be fulfilled only in an orderly system of church courts.

The 'Presbyterian Church' was only a latent church. If some master hand could draw scattered elements together into a comprehensive organization the church would be born. What was lacking was Presbyterianism's most distinctive feature: an authoritative and indigenous ²³ area presbytery.

²³ For a study of the difficulties faced by two early American denominations because of their being controlled from Europe, Cf. Appendix, I, pp.

CHAPTER TWO

The Formation of the original Presbytery

One writer says that the "Germs of Presbyterianism were strewn throughout the colonies as far south as the Carolinas".¹ We may not appreciate this image of contagion, yet it certainly is true that a potential Presbyterian Church was present in the scattered elements of colonial America. An exact tabulation of 'Presbyterian' congregations on the eve of the original Presbytery is impossible, but it has been estimated that in 1705 there was the following distribution: Ten congregations in Maryland and Delaware, seven in New York, nine in New Jersey, two in Pennsylvania, and two in Virginia. Beyond these there were perhaps a score of churches in New England (mainly in Connecticut) that called themselves Presbyterian, and about four in the Carolinas.²

A. The leadership of Francis Makemie

The congregations in Maryland are of immediate import for our study. Perhaps as early as 1665 Ulster Scots³ started to settle in and about the Chesapeake Bay region. In 1680 there was a permanent settlement in Maryland, with a particularly large concentration of Ulster Scots in the area of Snow Hill, Dorchester County. Here the Patuxent River congregation had a broken succession of pastors: William Thompson ministered from 1643 to 1648, Francis Doughty (Cf. Supra, p. 9) from August 1657 to 1662, John Legett from 1662 to 1663, Charles Nicolet in 1669, and Matthew Hill from 1669 to 1679. Nathaniel Taylor became pastor to the people in

¹ Ford, Henry J., The Scotch-Irish in America, Princeton, 1915, p.330.

² "The Two Hundredth Anniversary of the Organization of the Presbyterian Church in the United States of America," JPH, III, p. 255.

³ For an account of the Scots in Ulster, Cf. Stewart, David, The Scots in Ulster, 1605-1642, Belfast, 1954-1957; and Leyburn, James G., The Scotch-Irish: a Social History, Chapel Hill, North Carolina, 1962, Part II, pp. 83-153. Leyburn's work, though marred by historical inaccuracies, presents an interesting sociological picture.

this area sometime before the turn of the century, but, prior to his ministry, ruling elder Ninian Beall led the congregation and was the most instrumental figure in holding this people together.⁴ Beall had followed William Durand, who had been an elder of the Patuxent people during the ministries of Doughty and Hill. The service of such elders was of immense importance prior to the formal organization of American Presbyterianism.

William Trail, who had been the clerk of the Presbytery of Laggan, in Ulster, came to Maryland in 1682. This presbytery had received a letter in 1680 from a Colonel William Stevens of Maryland, who had established in 1665 a large plantation on the west bank of the Pocomoke River, which he called Rehoboth ("There is room").⁵ He was a broad-minded vestryman of the Church of England who realized that the majority of the members of his settlement desired a Presbyterian minister. In his letter to the presbytery, therefore, Stevens asked for a minister to come to settle at Rehoboth.⁶ Nothing was done about the request, however, since the following year the presbytery disbanded; as a matter of fact, less than a month after the last meeting, which was held in July of 1681 at St. Johnston, Trail had been arrested by the government for his 'dissenting' churchmanship and imprisoned for eight months. It was after his release in April of 1682 that he made his way directly to Maryland, the request from Stevens undoubtedly crystal-clear in his mind. After ministering in the area for less than ten years Trail sailed for

⁴ Thompson, Ernest T., Presbyterians in the South, Vol. I: 1607-1861, Richmond, 1963, pp. 18-20. Beall lived to see the formation of the original Presbytery. Cf. Briggs, Charles A., American Presbyterianism, etc., Edinburgh, 1885, p. 114.

⁵ Clarke, Walter L., "American Presbyterian Beginnings," JPH, XV, p. 328.

⁶ The minutes of the Presbytery of Laggan for December 29, 1680 state: "Collonell Stevens from Maryland beside Virginia, his desire of a godly minister is presented to us, the meeting will consider it seriously and do what they can in it. Mr. John Hoart is to write to Mr. Keys about this and Mr. Robert Rule to the meetings of Route and Tyrone and Mr. William Traill to the meetings of Down and Antrim." Quoted in Briggs, op. cit., p. 115n.

Scotland, where in September of 1690 he became the minister of the parish church at Borthwick, near Edinburgh.⁷ He died there in 1714.⁸

But there was another who heard the plea from Stevens read at the meeting of the Ulster presbytery: a young candidate for the ministry from Ramelton in County Donegal. Francis Makemie⁹ was born about the year 1658 and was enrolled at the University of Glasgow (Franciscus Makemius Scotto Hyburnus) in February of 1675/6. Few details of his early life are known,¹⁰ but on January 28, 1679/80 the minutes of the Presbytery of Laggan record that "Mr. Francis McKemy comes,

⁷ Cf. Stewart, David, Fasti of the American Presbyterian Church, Belfast, 1943, p. 23. This brief work was printed as an effort to correct the attempts of Richard Webster in his History of the Presbyterian Church in America, etc. to give an adequate account of the ministers of Irish origin who ministered in America during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. Stewart lists 119 Irish ministers who labored in America under the authority of the main Presbyterian bodies (original Presbytery, Synods of Philadelphia and New York, Synod of New York and Philadelphia, and the General Assembly). Cf. also "Book of Discipline of the Kirk of Borthwick begun Anno 1690," p. 1.

⁸ WL, Vol. XI, no. 80. This letter, of March 23, 1716, from William Trail, Jr., also a minister, to Robert Wodrow, stated that he had discovered diaries kept by his father from 1674 until 1714. Extensive search by this author has failed to uncover them.

Scott, Hew, Fasti Ecclesiae Scoticae, Vol. I, Edinburgh, 1915, p. 302, says that Trail was ordained in Ireland in 1671. But [Reid, James S.], History of Congregations of the Presbyterian Church in Ireland, etc., Belfast, 1886, p. 28, states that he was "secretly ordained" in Lifford, Ireland in 1672.

Briggs, op. cit., p. 116n., says that Trail removed to Scotland in 1688, and Trinterud, Leonard J., The Forming of An American Tradition, Philadelphia, 1949, p. 26, follows this statement uncritically. The only existing copy of A Christian Covenanted Confession, (by John Eliot), gives the proper year. Written in ink at the bottom: "This Indian Confession & Covenant of the Converts in New-England was brought from thence in the year 1690 & afterwards gifted to the Bibliothek of the Colledge of Edbr' (my alma mater) by W Trail". For brief, but detailed, accounts of Trail's life, Cf. Briggs, op. cit., pp. 115-117 and Scott, op. cit. For an account of his imprisonment, Cf. Wodrow Mss., Vol. LXXV, No. 18.

⁹ Like many men of his period the name was spelled several ways, e.g. McKemy, MacKemy, M. Kemy; but he signed his letters Makemie. Cf. Bowen, L.P., "Makemie and Rehoboth," JPH, VI, p. 155.

¹⁰ The most adequate summaries of his life are in Briggs, op. cit., pp. xlii-xlv and 116-118; Trinterud, The Forming of An American Tradition, op. cit., p. 27; Thompson, op. cit., pp. 20-22; Gillett, E.H., History of the Presbyterian Church, etc., Philadelphia, 1873, I, pp. 4-6; Ford, Harry P., "Chronological Outline of the Life of Francis Makemie," JPH, IV, pp. 410-414; Dictionary of National Biography Vol. XII, London, 1909, pp. 834-835; Dictionary of American Biography, Vol. XII, London, 1933, pp. 215-216; Lecky, Alexander G., In the Days of the Laggan Presbytery, Belfast, 1908, pp. 139-141. Cf. also Bowen, L.P., The Days of Makemie, etc., Philadelphia, 1885.

with a recommendation from Mr. Thomas Drumond [Makemie's pastor at Ramelton], to the Meeting: Mrs. [i.e. Messers.] John Heart & Ro[ber]t. Rule are ap[pr]o[ve]d. to speak privately to him, & to enquire into his reading & progress in his studies." ¹¹

It is likely, as Drury ¹² and Briggs ¹³ suggest, that Makemie was licensed in the autumn of 1681 (or nearly 1682?) and was ordained in 1682, since he preached in Burt, Ireland on April 2 of that year ¹⁴ and arrived in America in 1683.

Makemie gave this account of his ordination:

Ere I received the imposition of hands in that scriptural and orderly separation unto my holy and ministerial calling, that I gave requiring satisfaction to godly, learned and judicious discerning men, of a work of grace and conversion wrought in my heart at fifteen years of age, by and from the pains of a godly schoolmaster, who used no small diligence in gaining tender souls to Gods service and fear. ¹⁵

Probably with the urging of Trail, Makemie came to Maryland, but he did not settle as a regular pastor. Indeed, during the twenty-five years before his death he acted more as an itinerating preacher, visiting and preaching in Maryland, Virginia, the Barbadoes, North Carolina, and Philadelphia. He made an attempt to reach the Presbyterian settlement at Charleston, South Carolina, but ¹⁶ was driven back by storms at sea.

¹¹ "A Transcript of the Entries in the Minutes of the Presbytery of Laggan, Ireland, which Refer to Francis Makemie," JPH, III, pp. 278-280. This transcript was prepared in 1906 by the clerk of that presbytery and includes two references to Makemie which Briggs omitted in his appendix. Cf. Briggs, op. cit., pp. xlv-xlv.

¹² Drury, Clifford M., "The Irish Background of Francis Makemie," JPH, XXXV, p. 118.

¹³ Briggs, op. cit., p. xlv.

¹⁴ Ibid.

¹⁵ Quoted in Ibid.

¹⁶ Cf. letter of Makemie to Increase Mather, July 22, 1684, printed in Briggs, op. cit., pp. xlv-xlvii. We can only speculate as to whether or not Makemie would have brought these Presbyterians into the main stream of American Presbyterianism.

It has been known that Makemie labored during the late 1690's in the Barbadoes, Cf. Thompson, op. cit., p. 21, but the diary of Francis Borland gives us a new insight. Borland made this entry for March 25, 1690: "I sailed for Barbados meeting a preacher there named Francis Mackemy." Ramsay, Jack, "The Borland Memorial," JPH, XLI, p. 146.

Makemie in America seems always to have regarded himself as a servant of the whole Church rather than as the settled pastor of a congregation. In everything, he sensed the urgent need for a unifying force within the church, some magnet to draw into close contact scattered Presbyterian elements. He felt this strongly in the civil sphere also and in 1705 wrote his Plain and friendly perswasive to the inhabitants of Virginia and Maryland for promoting towns and cohabitation, etc. The title reveals his purpose: To encourage the formation of towns and cities in the colonies so that there would be cohesiveness in civil as well as church life. He greatly feared stagnation from lack of vitality and commerce. He said:

Towns and cohabitation would highly advance religion, which flourishes most in cohabitations; for in remote and scattered settlements we can never enjoy so fully, frequently, and certainly, those privileges and opportunities as are to be had in all Christian towns and cities; for by reason of bad weather, or other accidents, ministers are prevented, and people are hindered to attend, and so disappoint one another: But in towns, congregations are never wanting, and children and servants never are without opportunity of hearing, who cannot travel many miles to hear, and be catechised. ¹⁷

Makemie managed a large amount of writing for his day. In addition to the Plain and friendly perswasive he published a catechism expounding the Westminster Confession; ¹⁸ an answer to an eccentric Quaker's criticism of that catechism (An Answer to George Keith's Libel, published in 1694); Truths in a True Light, Or a Pastoral Letter to the Reformed Protestants in Barbadoes vindicating the Non-Conformists from the mis-representations, commonly made of them, in that Island, and in other places; and demonstrating that they are indeed the truest and soundest part of the Church of England (published in 1699); A Narrative of a new and unusual imprisonment, etc. (published in 1707); and A Good conversation, etc. (published in 1707), a sermon which led to his imprisonment. ¹⁹

¹⁷ Makemie, Francis, Plain and friendly perswasive, etc., London, 1705, p. 11.

¹⁸ No extant copy is known.

¹⁹ A comprehensive work, setting forth all the extant writings and letters of Makemie, plus contemporary documents relating to him, has been an urgent need in the study of American Presbyterianism. As a result of research done for this thesis, the author has been commissioned by The Presbyterian Historical Society in America to prepare such a volume for their monograph series, "Studies in Presbyterian History," to be published by the Westminster Press.

But Makemie was most active in organizing churches. Following his marriage, he settled in Accomac County, on the eastern shore of Virginia, where in 1699 he received a dissenter's license to preach; he then drew together congregations at Snow Hill, Rehoboth, Wicomico, Pitts Creek, and Manokin, all in Maryland. ²⁰

All this activity by no means went unnoticed. In a remarkable letter (quite valuable for our consideration) Colonel Quarry of the Society for the Propagation of the Gospel wrote from Philadelphia to the Lord Bishop of London. The letter was dated the 20th of January 1707/8:

My Lord I have lately visited all the provinces and Governments to the Northward in the discharge of my duty and since it gave me the Opportunity of seeing and enquiring into the Circumstances and State of the Church...I think it my duty to give your Lordship an Account of it, which I will do with truth, Justice, and impartiality.....One place is New Castle where there is a very good Brick Church built, they have a very worthy Man Mr. Ross, but the Place is very unhappy in being divided the Greatest part are Presbyterians and the Division is much greater than ever, by the late coming of one MacKenney [Makemie] a great Pillar of that Sect who travels thro' all the main like a Bishop having his Pupills to attend him and where he comes Ordains Ministers and executes all the Powers of a Bishop, he pretends to a great interest at Court, and makes a great noise wherever he comes. I presume your Lordship hath had an Account of him especially of his Extravagant Acting in the Government of New York to which I refer and return to my Subject this Division at New Castle makes things there very uneasy to Mr. Ross, those that ought to Contribute to his Support are joyned with the presbyterians, So that he hath but very little to support him, besides the unhealthiness of the place adds to his misfortune but I hope time will reconcile things and Persons and make all easy especially if this strowling Fellow McKenney were discouraged, this very man by his subscriptions from persons in England and those he hath influenced here, has built an Extraordinary good Meeting House in this Town with a considerable allowance to their Minister. ²¹

²⁰ Thompson, *op. cit.*, p. 22. There are traditions that Makemie founded some of these congregations earlier (e.g., a plaque in the Rehoboth church states that it was founded in 1683; and the Onancock Virginia congregation has been said to have been founded by Makemie in 1684. Cf. Turner, Joseph B., "Church Records in the Presbytery of New Castle," JPH, VII, p. 386). Cf. also Slosser, Gaius J. (ed.), *They Seek a Country*, etc., New York, 1955, p. 32. But these traditions do not stand on firm ground. Cf. Trinterud, *op. cit.*, p. 322, n.38.

²¹ "Documents Relating to Rev. Francis Makemie," JPH, XVIII, pp. 221-222. Cf. p. 221 for a copy of Makemie's license to preach, obtained from the government of Virginia.

The most fascinating suggestion of this letter is that Makemie ordained ministers. But since there is no other indication that he ever did this, solivagus, and since the letter was written after the formation of the original Presbytery, we can infer that the writer referred to Makemie's activity as a member of the presbytery; or perhaps he did not even know of the existence of a presbytery and believed that Makemie performed these ecclesiastical functions on his own. In any case, the description of Makemie is unquestionably accurate. It is similar to what Edward Hyde, Lord Cornbury, said soon after, as he saw the collapse of his position as governor of New York. With Makemie the immediate cause of his downfall, Cornbury verbally attacked him, and in so doing gave Makemie an unintended compliment, calling Makemie, a "Jack-of-all-trades; he is a Preacher, a Doctor of Physick, a Merchant, an Attorney, or Counsellor at Law, and which is worst of all, a Disturber of Governments".²² Certainly he was a disturber of Cornbury's own government, the governor, a cousin of Queen Anne, soon being recalled to Britain in disgrace.²³ Whatever authority Makemie exercised before the formation of the presbytery, we cannot rule out the possibility that he had been ordained in Ulster with the special and explicit commission to establish American Presbyterian churches.

The year after he arrived in Maryland Makemie initiated a correspondence with Increase Mather, whom he probably met on a hasty journey to London in 1691. Four of the five extant personal letters written by Makemie are to Mather,²⁴ but none mention church polity. Makemie was hardly narrow in his approach to

²² Quoted in Thompson, op. cit., p. 25.

²³ For the full account, written by Makemie, Cf. A narrative of a new and unusual American Imprisonment, etc., Hill, William, History of the Rise....of American Presbyterianism, Washington, D.C., 1839, Appendix. Cf. also Briggs, op. cit., pp. 152-155 and Gillett, op. cit., I, pp. 12-16.

²⁴ All of Makemie's personal letters are reprinted in Briggs, op. cit., pp. xlvii-l.

and understanding of the Reformed Church, for he saw the absolute necessity of concerted effort within the infant church in the colonies, and would have been sympathetic to James Anderson's description of himself and his fellow ministers as "mostly but young raw heads" ²⁵ in "this American wilderness". ²⁶

One of Makemie's outstanding achievements was the establishing of a congregation at Philadelphia, where in August of 1692 he preached the first sermon heard in that town. Soon after, he left for the Barbadoes where he ministered for five or six years, before returning to Virginia. By 1695 the small dissenting congregation was worshipping regularly in Philadelphia. ²⁷

Upon Makemie's return, a close relationship developed between him and Jedidiah Andrews, the new pastor of the Philadelphia congregation, and, as a matter of fact, it is probable that Makemie was most instrumental in having Andrews ordained, about 1701. There is no evidence to support Trinterud's conjecture that Andrews "could hardly have been ordained by Makemie and other Scotch-Irish Presbyterians". ²⁸ Since we know nothing of the details of the ordination, ²⁹ we may only speculate; yet the extremely close friendship of

²⁵ WL, Vol. XXII, no. 115.

²⁶ Ibid., no. 116.

²⁷ It was composed of Baptists, Presbyterians, and Congregationalists. Philadelphia was quite small at the time, having in 1692 only forty-four families. The place of worship for the church was called "The Storehouse" and was used during weekdays by the Barbadoes West India Trading Company. In 1698 Jedidiah Andrews, a Presbyterian who had graduated from Harvard in 1695, was called as minister of the 'union' congregation. But soon a dispute arose, and the Baptists withdrew to take up worship in Anthony Morris' brewhouse. The Presbyterians, along with the few Congregationalists, listened to Andrews "amidst the atmosphere of the indigo, cotton, wool, tobacco and ginger of the Barbadoes Storehouse". 'Penn', "Men and Things," (from the Philadelphia Evening Bulletin of Tuesday, April 24, 1906), JPH, III, pp. 281-284. Cf. Briggs, op. cit., pp. liv-lvi.

²⁸ Trinterud, The Forming of An American Tradition, op. cit., p. 321, n.19.

²⁹ The church's Record of Baptism and Marriages, which began in the autumn of 1701, shows that Andrews was then ordained. Cf. Agnew, Benjamin L., "When Was the First Presbytery of the Presbyterian Church in the United States Organized?", JPH, III, p. 11.

Makemie and Andrews,³⁰ plus Makemie's natural leadership in the church, which caused the Church of England to accuse him of ordaining ministers on his own authority, make it more probable that Makemie at least played the most important role in the ordination. This is much more likely than Trinterud's suggestion that the ordination was performed by a "Congregational Council". Moreover, Trinterud makes much of the fact that "all Andrews' connections at this time were with the New Englanders",³¹ implying that all the New Englanders were automatically Congregationalists or inclined in that direction. We will see presently that the men to whom Andrews was closest were the most Presbyterian-minded in the New England churches. It is probable that some of these men met together for the ordination, all under the direction of Makemie.

In 1704 Makemie sailed to Britain to solicit fellow-ministers for work in

³⁰ Makemie's will said: "I give and bequeath unto Mr. Jedidiah Andrews Minister at Philadelphia and his heires for ever my black Coverlet Cloak and my new Cane bought and fixed at Boston." He also left Andrews "the rest of my Library of Books of all sorts....and after his decease or Removall from Philadelphia I Give and Bequeath said Library to such Minister or Ministers as shall succeed him in that place and office and to such only as shall be of the Presbyterian or Independent persuasion and none else." Cf. "Records of Accomack County, Virginia, Relating to the Rev. Francis Makemie," JPH, IV, pp. 126-127. (This entire series in JPH reproduces the will and many other public documents. The will is also printed in Hill, op. cit., pp. 127-129.) The reference to "Independent" reveals Makemie's broad spirit. But when, at the same time, he willed land for the church, he said: "I order and empower my Execut'x hereafterwards nominated and appointed....to make over and alienate that Lott [at Rehoboth,] on which the meeting house is built in as ample manner to all intents and purposes as shall be required for ye ends and uses of a Presbyterian Congregation as if I were personally present and to their successors for ever and none else but to such of ye same persuasion in matters of Religion." "Records of Accomack County, etc.", op. cit., p. 127. It is evident from these provisions that Makemie made a distinction between Presbyterians and Independents. He was willing to see Congregational elements in the Philadelphia church and even left open the possibility that a minister of that persuasion might become pastor there. But as for the church for which he was willing land in Rehoboth, he made it clear that here was to be a Presbyterian church, and none other. Unfortunately this congregation did not continue in any form; due to growing Anglican legal domination in Virginia it would not be until the 1740's that Presbyterianism would become a major factor in the church life of that colony. Cf. Appendix III, p. 388, for a letter of a pastor in Maryland, describing in 1723 the difficulties he faced on a missionary journey to Virginia.

³¹ Trinterud, The Forming of an American Tradition, op. cit.

the American colonies. The Presbyterians³² of London enlisted the services of two young men: John Hampton, from Makemie's home Presbytery of Laggan, and George McNish,³³ a Scot, both graduates of the University of Glasgow. They arrived in Maryland in 1705, McNish serving in various communities for several years before accepting a permanent call; Hampton also itinerated, until 1707.

The time was ripe for Makemie. He had returned with the two new young ministers, both of whom began laboring in Maryland, along with Nathaniel Taylor and himself; Andrews was minister in Philadelphia; and John Wilson and Samuel Davis were in Delaware. By drawing these ministers and their congregations into an authoritative body, others would join; and the nascent Presbyterian Church in America would be born.

Makemie would never have imagined that he was becoming the "Father of American Presbyterianism"; such laurels are the reverence of retrospect. He saw two very realistic things happening: first, here was the first truly inter-colonial church structure, strengthening and shaping the life of the Church. Second, here was an actual bond among the colonies themselves. At meetings of the Presbytery ruling elders and ministers talked not only of ecclesiastical affairs, but also of matters which were affecting the whole body politic--perhaps even urgently concerning the life of the young colonies. It would not be entirely incorrect to call this 'practical Presbyterianism'.

The forming of the original Presbytery took place in the spring of 1706,³⁴

³² Not the "United Brethren", as is stated by Trinterud, *Ibid.*, p. 31. Cf. *Infra*, p. 36.

³³ Cf. Briggs, *op. cit.*, p. 139n.

³⁴ By far the most adequate and convincing research concerning the date of the first meeting of the presbytery is by Benjamin Agnew, *op. cit.*, pp. 9-24. He sums up his argument by saying: "We must of necessity, in view of all the facts of history heretofore presented, conclude that the Presbytery was organized one year before the stated meeting in March, 1707, or in the spring of 1706, according to our present calendar." p. 25.

and two years later Makemie was dead, at the age of fifty. ³⁵

B. Arguments Regarding the Nature and Constitution of the original Presbytery

For well over a century there has been a running battle within American Presbyterianism regarding the basis of Presbyterian polity in that country. ³⁶ The debate was triggered during the 1830's with the growing cleavage between the "Old School" and the "New School" branches of the Presbyterian Church in America. The Old School was increasingly suspicious of the "Congregationalism" of the New School, and therefore was anxious to show that American Presbyterianism, at its inception, had been "rigid", "classical", "Scottish", "true-blue" Presbyterianism, uncompromised by any Congregationalism. This is the way that the founding fathers of Presbyterianism in the colonies had intended the church to be, they said; later corruptions (especially the Plan of Union of 1801 between the Presbyterian and Congregational churches) were faithless to our heritage, compromising the true Reformed and Presbyterian faith. They must be eliminated.

On the other hand, the New School men desired to show that the Presbyterianism founded in America was, at the most, a very mild form of Presbyterianism; it included, they said, Congregational elements and was built on a very broad base. According to this view, early American Presbyterianism was never really authoritative in its judicatories; presbyteries and synods were, in the main, advisory. ³⁷

³⁵ For exhaustive investigation which apparently proves Makemie's place of death and burial, Cf. JPH, IV, pp. 394-402.

³⁶ Evidences of such disagreement can be found much earlier, especially during the Old Side-New Side controversies of the mid-eighteenth-century. But it was not until the Old School-New School controversy that the question of polity was formulated in a systematic way.

³⁷ Cf. Brackett, William O., Jr., "The Rise and the Development of the New School in the Presbyterian Church in the United States of America," etc., JPH, XIII, pp. 117-140, 145-174.

Unfortunately, some histories of early American Presbyterianism were written during this period and in this climate; these were 'propaganda tracts' rather than attempts at objective history. The two most obvious of these works both were published in 1839, two years after the "excision" of the New School Synods by the main Old School group, and enable us to outline the controversy.

William Hill was a member of the Presbytery of Winchester in Virginia and had been commissioned to write a history of that presbytery. By 1836 the Synod of Virginia asked Hill to broaden his work. He stated in the final result of his efforts, History of the Rise, Progress, Genius, and Character of American Presbyterianism, that he had formed his opinions "before any high excitement or divisions had occurred in our church", ³⁸ and a great part of his work, he said, was finished before the 1837 General Assembly. The book was published later in 1839 than was Hodge's, since Hill made numerous references to Hodge's work. But Hodge, in writing, was fully familiar with Hill's position, since Hill had published a number of articles on the subject prior to the appearance of his book, and the articles followed the same line of argument. The stage was set for conflict.

Charles Hodge was the towering theological figure in American Christianity during the mid-nineteenth-century. As a professor at Princeton Seminary he wielded great influence, and he can be considered the most able spokesman for the Old School position. But Hodge opposed the action of 1837 which had excluded the New School Synods from the church. He, and most of the other Princeton men, became a mediating party, who, though fully agreeing with the sentiments of other Old School men, did not believe that an arbitrary excision of part of the church was constitutional. Hodge, looking back, wrote in 1871:

In all the controversies culminating in the division of the Church in 1837-38, the conductors of the Review [Princeton Review] were in entire

³⁸ Hill, op. cit., p. xi.

sympathy with the Old-school party. They sided with them as to the right, and under existing circumstances, the duty, of the church, to conduct the work of education and foreign and domestic missions by ecclesiastical boards, instead of voluntary, independent societies. They agreed with that party on all doctrinal questions in dispute; and as to the obligation to enforce conformity to our Confession of Faith on the part of ministers and teachers of theology under our jurisdiction. They were so unfortunate, however, as to differ from many, and apparently, from a majority of their Old-school brethren, as to the wisdom of the measures adopted for securing a common object. ³⁹

Yet Hodge approached the writing of his work, The Constitutional History of the Presbyterian Church in the United States of America, with just as much intent to prove his position as did Hill with his. For this reason neither can be regarded as reliable history, but only as excellent illustrations of their respective viewpoints.

Hill was much older than Hodge and entered upon his task with an almost embarrassingly apologetic tone; the book, much shorter than Hodge's was more of a personal lamentation than a systematic history. He sincerely believed that the work would mean his undoing. He wrote:

No motives of ambition could induce me to expose myself to what I foresee awaits me now, at the close of life, for the stand I take.... The reward I am looking for, from earth, is only the peaceful rest of the grave. Earth holds out no other inducement to me.⁴⁰

Hodge gave his understanding of the New School position:

...it has been contended that the Westminster Confession of Faith was adopted as the Confession of the Presbyterian Church only in a very qualified manner, and that the proper condition of ministerial communion is nothing more than agreement in those points, which are "essential and necessary to doctrine, worship, or government." As it regards church order, it is said that American Presbyterianism is something very different from the Scottish system; that our higher judicatories have only judicial and advisory powers; that is, the right to hear and decide appeals, complaints, and references, and to give advice; that the General Assembly, especially, is nothing but an appellate court and advisory council; that our several courts

³⁹ "Princeton Review," Index, 1871, p. 3.

⁴⁰ Hill, op. cit., p. xiv.

are, as to their existence and action, entirely independent of each other. It is asserted that "Congregationalism was the basis of Presbyterianism in this country"; and that "had Congregationalists never entered the field beyond the bounds of New England, Presbyterianism would scarcely have existed in this country, except in name." ⁴¹

Hill is intent to show that the "Scottish element" was nil at the formation of the original Presbytery. To Scottish Presbyterianism he directs his most scathing words:

[The] Scottish system is essentially and necessarily illiberal and intolerant.....The Scotch, as a nation, are not readily given to change, and are noted for a pertinacious adherence to old ideas and habits to this day. But, for mercy's sake, let us not sacrifice all the rights and privileges acquired by increasing light and experience, to honor them or their system. ⁴²

Hill very sketchily surveys the presbyterianism of Holland, Geneva, and France, which all come out well, compared with Scotland. He makes the remarkable statement that "[Holland has] no large General Assembly, with unlimited powers, to meet annually. Their Synods are their highest courts of judicature; their ecclesiastical affairs are generally transacted in, and by their Classes or Presbyteries." ⁴³ It is amazing that Hill does not know that the 'General Assembly' of the Dutch Reformed Church is called a Synod. Further, he says: "[The Church of] Scotland never colonized a church out of her own limits", ⁴⁴ which is incorrect. Then he pits Samuel Miller, an Old School leader of Princeton, over against Hodge, but drops the matter, saying: "I shall now leave our juvenile Doctors to settle this matter between themselves....hoping...they will teach each other a little more discretion before they end their strife." ⁴⁵ Hill also believes that after the

⁴¹ Hodge, Charles A., The Constitutional History of the Presbyterian Church in the United States of America, Philadelphia, 1851, I, pp. 9-11.

⁴² Hill, op. cit., pp. 7, 8.

⁴³ Ibid., p. 8.

⁴⁴ Ibid.

⁴⁵ Ibid., p. 49.

establishment of Presbyterianism in Geneva and in Scotland there was a "peaceable" situation since there was Presbyterianism exclusively, with no other churches with which to contend.⁴⁶ He displays here great historical naïveté in ignoring the constant and bitter struggles between Presbyterianism and Episcopacy in Scotland following the Reformation in 1560, for it was nearly two hundred years later before some reasonably stable settlement of Church life came about in Scotland.⁴⁷ Such considerations indicate with what care we must approach Hill's work.

Both Hill and Hodge lay a great deal of stress on proving the nationalities of the seven ministers who made up the original Presbytery. This appears to be a rather futile argument, since in each case many other considerations can be raised to offset the question of national background and the accompanying implication that this background would determine the 'strictness' or 'liberality' of their Presbyterianism. Hodge believes that all the members of the 1706 Presbytery were Scots or Ulster Scots, except for Andrews, who he admits was from New England.⁴⁸

⁴⁶ Ibid., pp. 115-116.

⁴⁷ Cf. Burleigh, J.H.S., A Church History of Scotland, London, 1960, pp. 261-285.

⁴⁸ Hodge, op. cit., p. 78. Hodge here confirms Andrews' New England background by stating that "it is believed there is no instance in the early minutes of his [Andrews] being appointed to write to either Scotland or Ireland". For some peculiar reason Hill takes him to task for this statement, which is favorable to Hill's own position, and says: "The following is an extract from the minutes to which he [Hodge] confidently appeals '.....Ordered by the Presbytery, that Mr. Andrews and Mr. Makemie write to Scotland.....'". Hill, op. cit., p. 161.

This would seem to be a serious omission on Hodge's part, until we find that what Hill quotes as being what the minutes say is not what the minutes say at all. Here is the proper extract from the minutes of the original Presbytery, in 1708: "Ordered by the Presbytery, that Mr. Francis McKemie write to Scotland.....". Records, p. 10.

It is impossible to explain this glaring contradiction between the minutes and what Hill quotes as being the minutes. This is a certain indication that he was not working with basic source material.

Hill says that "If there was a solitary member from Scotland among them, it has yet to be proved", ⁴⁹ and believes that George Gillespie, who arrived in the colonies in 1712, was the first Scottish minister. ⁵⁰ Hodge says that since "all the original members of the presbytery except one were Presbyterian ministers from Scotland or Ireland.....there can be little doubt that, at least at the beginning, whatever it may have become afterwards, our church was a Presbyterian Church". ⁵¹

It is an unfortunate turn of chance, but the first leaf of the minutes of the original Presbytery is missing, and no historian shows evidence of ever having seen it. This actually means that the first two pages are gone, and the fact has given rise to much speculation as to what might have been contained there by way of 'constitutional standards' or basis of the Presbytery's polity. Agnew has shown that if there were such a constitution it must have been quite short; Hodge boldly says that "The a priori probability is in favour of the supposition that the first page of the minutes contained some general recognition of the standards of the church of Scotland.....". ⁵² Over against this Hill believes that the Presbytery was under the patronage of the "Heads of Agreement" ⁵³ of London, and that, therefore, it was a group of merged Congregationalists and Presbyterians that provided the money for the first "missionaries", Hampton and McNish. ⁵⁴ He considers this Heads of Agreement spirit as the same spirit of

⁴⁹ Hill, op. cit., p. 163.

⁵⁰ Ibid., p. 99.

⁵¹ Hodge, op. cit., p. 90.

⁵² Ibid., p. 89.

⁵³ On the Heads of Agreement, Cf. Supra., pp. 11- and Infra., p. 36.

⁵⁴ Hill, op. cit., p. 79. Cf. also pp. 96-98.

the Plan of Union of 1801 (which, of course, he is attempting to defend). "Noble-hearted fathers and founders of American Presbyterianism! Would that their successors had always imitated them!" ⁵⁵

Hill argues, correctly, that there were at least two congregations in the early period of American Presbyterianism (First church in Philadelphia and Woodbridge) that did not have a session and yet were still members of presbytery and synod. If then, he says, the Old School men excised in 1837 that section of the church which had been most influenced by the "Congregationalism" of the Union of 1801, they certainly would have excised the original Presbytery. ⁵⁶ Yet in less than ten years the original Presbytery ordered the election of ruling elders in all its congregations.

Hill concludes that the first Presbytery was "a system of compromise as to government and discipline", ⁵⁷ while Hodge concludes "that there is not one of the functions of a Presbytery, as now understood, which the original Presbytery of our church did not exercise from the beginning. It claimed the same supervision and control over churches; the same authority over its members; and was in all respects as thoroughly Presbyterian in its powers as any similar body at the present day." ⁵⁸

Both Hodge and Hill present their work in quite disorganized styles, which is inevitable, given their polemical approach. Therefore, neither is willing to admit any truth in the other's position; and, while occasionally clearly stating the evidence, they then refuse to draw out the obvious implications for a well-founded,

⁵⁵ Ibid., p. 91.

⁵⁶ Ibid., p. 112.

⁵⁷ Ibid., p. 164.

⁵⁸ Hodge, op. cit., p. 105.

objective history. James Hastings Nichols' comment on Hodge in another connection can apply here with equal force, both to Hodge and to Hill. Hodge, says Nichols, "lacked understanding of what history is. For him the past was an armory of theological tenets, and a man had a right to pick and choose as he would".⁵⁹

Following the lines set down in these works, although with the definite advantage of retrospect, other volumes appeared in the Old School and New School 'traditions'. The most significant Old School work, outside of Hodge, was Richard Webster's A History of the Presbyterian Church In America, from its origin until the year 1760. With Biographical Sketches of Its Early Ministers. This book was published posthumously in 1857 and is incomplete in its historical section. With regard to the forming of the original Presbytery Webster said: "When the Presbytery of Philadelphia [i.e. original Presbytery] met, this [i.e. the Westminster Confession] doubtless made, of course, a part of their constitution."⁶⁰ He continued:

The first leaf of their records being lost, we can know nothing of the articles of agreement embraced in their bond of union [an apparent contradiction of what he has just said]; but if it were not for the paging, one might naturally suppose that a thousand leaves were gone, with the proceedings of a century spread upon them; for there is no appearance in the movements of the body, indicating that it was oppressed with a cumbrous system which it had not proved. The machinery goes on as quietly as though by long use every part had become thoroughly fitted for its place and work. Were it not for the names of places incidentally mentioned, one could easily believe that he had taken up the minutes of some of the original presbyteries of the Irish church.⁶¹

The real value of Webster's work is the biographical section, which covers three hundred and eighty-one pages, well over half the entire book, and gives the

⁵⁹ Nichols, James Hastings, Romanticism in American Theology, Chicago, 1961, p. 90.

⁶⁰ Webster, Richard, A History of the Presbyterian Church in America, etc., Philadelphia, 1857, p. 92.

⁶¹ Ibid., pp. 92-93.

biographies of two hundred early American Presbyterian ministers.

No other comprehensive history of American Presbyterianism has been written since by an author who can be labeled 'Old School', but several other works in the general area were written by Old School men. W.J. Foote wrote his "Sketches" of Virginia and of North Carolina soon after the schism of 1837-38,⁶² and Samuel Baird edited in 1854 (with a second edition in 1858) A Collection of the Acts, Deliverances, and Testimonies of the Supreme Judicatory of the Presbyterian Church, from its origin in America to the present time: with Notes and Documents, etc. Here a unique position is argued: that the original Presbytery was really no presbytery at all, but actually a General Assembly, in the full Scottish sense.⁶³ Several other Presbyterian historians, up to the present, have followed the Old School approach: principally William H. Roberts, H.P. Ford, L.P. Bowen, and Frederick W. Loetscher.

In the New School 'camp', seven years after Webster's book appeared, E.H. Gillett published his two-volumed History of the Presbyterian Church in the United States of America. Five years later, in 1869, the Old School and New School churches merged, and Gillett felt it necessary to revise his work in order "to remove whatever could be fairly considered as objectionable", so that his history would "prove acceptable to the reunited Church".⁶⁴ In this the author generally was successful. Concluding his section on the original Presbytery Gillett said: "We must hold to the strong improbability that the lost leaf of the records contained any specific standard for the adoption of members."⁶⁵

⁶² Cf. Foote, W.H., Sketches of North Carolina, etc., New York, 1846; and Sketches of Virginia, etc. (Second Series), New York, 1855.

⁶³ A Collection of the Acts, Deliverances, and Testimonies of the Supreme Judicatory, etc., Philadelphia, 1858, p. 276.

⁶⁴ Gillett, op. cit., p. vi.

⁶⁵ Ibid., p. 32.

"Evidently", he said, "their ecclesiasticism was of no very rigid type".⁶⁶

With C.A. Briggs' valuable book American Presbyterianism; its origin and early history, published in 1885, we deal with a basically objective view of Presbyterianism from its origins in America to the Revolutionary War. But Briggs, at some points, stands in the New School tradition. He says of the original Presbytery that "It was a broad, generous, tolerant spirit which effected this union."⁶⁷ Further, the Presbytery "was very different from a Westminster Classical Presbytery, or a Presbytery of the Kirk of Scotland".⁶⁸ Finally, "The Presbytery of Philadelphia [i.e. original Presbytery] was chiefly a meeting of ministers for ministerial exercise."⁶⁹ This final statement will be investigated further.

After Briggs' volume there was no appearance of a major work on the early history of American Presbyterianism for sixty-four years.⁷⁰ In 1949 Leonard J. Trinterud published The Forming of an American Tradition; a Re-examination of Colonial Presbyterianism. Here Trinterud is concerned to debunk the theory that American Presbyterianism was basically Scottish or Ulster-Scot in its formulation and to assert that its genius lay in its unique molding of various ethnic and church types into a new form of Presbyterianism determined mainly by Congregationalist-minded New Englanders.

Trinterud believes that "The original presbytery seems to have been founded

⁶⁶ Ibid., p. 25.

⁶⁷ Briggs, op. cit., p. 140.

⁶⁸ Ibid., p. 142.

⁶⁹ Ibid., p. 143.

⁷⁰ William Warren Sweet's volume on Presbyterians in the Religion on the American Frontier series was published in 1936, but deals with a later period and is, in any case, primarily a source book of documents rather than a history.

hurriedly, leaving a host of organizational details to be worked out later." ⁷¹
 Also, "it is certain that no constitution was adopted". ⁷² "It is now certain",
 he says, "that the first presbytery of 1706 was a very loosely organized body
 without a formal creed or plan of government". ⁷³ And so, "the Old School party
 of the nineteenth century misunderstood the origins of their Church". ⁷⁴

In building his case against Scot and Ulster Scot influence in early American
 Presbyterianism, Trinterud, standing firmly in the New School tradition, pulls
 the pendulum much too far and at several points reverts back to the early polemics
 of Hodge and Hill. Such a statement (in reference to the later Old Side) as

The opposition [Scots and Ulster Scots] were a group of small men
 who knew of no means adequate to reach the public. Their patterns
 of action were the highhanded policies of the ruling cliques in the
 Presbyterian Churches of Scotland and Ireland at that time. ⁷⁵

can only make one suspect that the author fails in the broad sympathy necessary
 for writing an adequate history. Zeal for a viewpoint is vital and can add life
 to dry facts; but published name-calling only harks back to a type of
 historical chauvinism that we would have hoped had since passed.

Avoiding such pitfalls, yet unashamedly 'New School', was the late Robert
 Hastings Nichols, whose Presbyterianism in New York State, published in 1963,
 shows clear traces of this orientation. The latest major work on American
 Presbyterianism does not deal extensively with our topic, but shows clear
 perception and emotional detachment. This is the large Volume One of Presbyterians

⁷¹ Trinterud, The Forming of an American Tradition, op. cit., p. 32.

⁷² Ibid., p. 30.

⁷³ Trinterud, Leonard J., "The New England Contribution to Colonial American
 Presbyterianism," Church History, XVII, no. 1, p. 36.

⁷⁴ Ibid., p. 35.

⁷⁵ Trinterud, The Forming of An American Tradition, op. cit., p. 80.

In the South by Ernest Trice Thompson; published in the autumn of 1963 it covers the period from 1607-1861.

Thompson, though, makes the curious observation that the original Presbytery was "'a happy union of British Presbyterianism in its several types.' It was an interesting combination--Scots and Scotch-Irishmen, sustained by funds provided by the Independents and Presbyterians of London, uniting with Puritan missionaries from New England in organic union in a classical presbytery." ⁷⁶ It is curious, because the entire statement is a paraphrase of Briggs ⁷⁷ and the first sentence, in quotation marks, a direct quote from Briggs. Yet Thompson inserts the statement that the original Presbytery was sustained by funds provided by the Independents, as well as the Presbyterians of London. The obvious reference here is to the Heads of Agreement, which we have mentioned before. Those in the New School tradition, with the exception of Briggs, have made much of this, feeling certain that it proves that the original Presbytery was influenced by Congregationalism at least as much as it was by Presbyterianism. Hill says that "Makemie with his Irish brethren [Hampton and McNish--although McNish was a Scot, not Irish].....could act with the United Brethren of London, who had met upon the half-way ground between a rigid Presbytery and loose Independency." ⁷⁸ He also goes to the trouble to point out that under the Heads of Agreement a presbytery was not absolutely necessary for ordination. ⁷⁹ As we have noted (Cf. Supra, p. 29), Hill believes McNish and Hampton to have been "missionaries" supported by a London fund, jointly operated by Congregationalists and Presbyterians under the Heads of Agreement.

⁷⁶ Thompson, op. cit., p. 25.

⁷⁷ Cf. Briggs, op. cit., p. 140.

⁷⁸ Hill, op. cit., pp. 158-159.

⁷⁹ Ibid., p. 147.

Trinterud also follows this approach, stating that it was under the union of Congregationalists and Presbyterians of London that money was provided to send Hampton and McNish to the colonies in 1705. He says that

While in London [in 1704], Makemie also sought to strengthen the colonial Church. From the General Fund of the United Brethren he secured the promise of money enough to support two ministers in the colonies for a period of two years. Two young Presbyterian ministers, seemingly then resident in London, were secured, John Hampton and George McNish.....

It was in the midst of such circumstances, then, that a presbytery was founded in the middle colonies.....⁸⁰

Trinterud earlier says that while Makemie was in London in 1691 there is "no doubt" that he

became acquainted with the leaders of the newly formed United Brethren, a group who were to mean much to him and to American Presbyterianism in the years ahead. Makemie's subsequent career reveals on several occasions a basic attitude very much akin to the Heads of Agreement of the United Brethren. From the General Fund of the United Brethren, Makemie was later also to draw substantial financial assistance.⁸¹

How amazing this line of argument^{is}, becomes clear when we realize that the United Brethren and their United Fund, established in 1690, were dissolved in 1694 because of differences between the Presbyterians and the Congregationalists. As Briggs, who went through the entire minutes of the Fund, says: "The minutes of the original meetings are in the first volume of the minutes of the Presbyterian Fund, which was supposed to be its [i.e. the United Fund's] legitimate successor, the Congregational brethren withdrawing".⁸² The two continued separate. In other words, the help that Makemie received in 1704-5 when he was in London was purely Presbyterian. Indeed, when the Presbytery in 1709 wrote

⁸⁰ Trinterud, The Forming of An American Tradition, op. cit., pp. 29-30.

⁸¹ Ibid., p. 27.

⁸² Briggs, op. cit., p. lviii. Cf. Also Roberts, William H., "The New England Churches and the First Presbytery", JPH, p. 262.

to London for a renewal of this help,⁸³ they addressed their request to Sir Edmund Harrison, a wealthy and influential Presbyterian layman who himself had been one of the managers of the Presbyterian Fund in London from 1694-1697.⁸⁴ And so Briggs' original statement, to which Thompson made his unfortunate addition, was that, of the members of the original Presbytery, McNish and Hampton were "sustained by funds provided by the Presbyterians of London".⁸⁵ As to Trinterud's statements on this matter we can only wonder.

Trinterud follows in the tradition of Hill and Hodge in placing importance on the origin of the first members of the Presbytery. Having to accept the strong probability that Samuel Davis, who ministered to the people of Lewes, Delaware, was an Irishman, Trinterud makes an unusual suggestion. Davis, he says, cannot be considered one of the founders and shapers of the Presbytery because of his poor churchmanship in carrying out presbytery business. Then Trinterud makes the unbelievable statement: "He [Davis] never took part in the life of the Church [?] nor did he ever attend any meeting of the presbytery of which a record is preserved."⁸⁶ Samuel Davis was elected moderator of the original Presbytery in May 1708.⁸⁷ He also was present at the 1714 meeting of the Presbytery.⁸⁸

In his discussion of the origins of the first ministers of the 1706 Presbytery

⁸³ Cf. Records, p. 16.

⁸⁴ Briggs, op. cit., p. 162n.

⁸⁵ Ibid., p. 140.

⁸⁶ Trinterud, "The New England Contribution," op. cit., p. 35.

⁸⁷ Records, pp. 10-11.

⁸⁸ Ibid., p. 36.

Trinterud only casually mentions that Jedidiah Andrews⁸⁹ was reared in the congregation at Hingham, Massachusetts, under the pastorate of Peter Hobart, who baptized him. Hobart, "who had always been a Presbyterian"⁹⁰ came into conflict with the Congregationalists of Massachusetts over the question of baptism. But in relation to Andrews, Trinterud is most fond of showing his close connections with friends in New England. The implication is that Andrews was being influenced towards a loosely-orientated polity by these Congregationally-orientated ministers. Trinterud especially points out the relation between Andrews and Benjamin Colman, "a Congregational minister of Boston who was very friendly with the New England Presbyterians in the middle colonies",⁹¹ and with whom Andrews carried on a long and extensive correspondence. But we must look more closely to Colman, to see just how 'Congregational' he actually was.

Benjamin Colman was ordained by the London Presbyterians as pastor of the Brattle Street Church in Boston in 1699,⁹² and the fact that he was ordained by Presbyterians upset Increase and Cotton Mather. He served in Boston for many years and carried on correspondence with his friends in the Middle Colonies and in Britain. Some of this correspondence is revealing. On March 1, 1720, he wrote a letter, probably to Robert Wodrow of the Church of Scotland, in which he

⁸⁹ In October of 1730 Andrews wrote from Philadelphia to his mother in New England: "Besides divers new congregations that are forming by these newcomers [Ulster Scots], we all call ourselves Presbyterians, none pretending to be called Congregationalists...In the Jerseys there are some that way, being originally of New England--yet they all submit to our Presbyteries readily enough; and the ministers are all Presbyterians though mostly from New England." Quoted in Roberts, op. cit., p. 261.

⁹⁰ Briggs, op. cit., p. 125n.

⁹¹ Trinterud, The Forming of An American Tradition, op. cit., p. 43.

⁹² Cf. Briggs, op. cit., p. 124n., who says: "Colman went to London as a young man and cooperated with the Presbyterians. He served as a missionary of the Presbyterian Board, at Cambridge and at Bath.....[He] returned to Boston in hearty sympathy with them."

mentioned a great deal of disorder in regard to the settlement and dismissal of pastors in New England. He said:

All this disorder is owing to ye want of Presbyterian authority & Jurisdiction among us. Tho' it be true yt. we declare here...Independency, & plead for ye consociation of Chhs. [i.e. Churches], & yt. they apply to & are accountable to Neighbour chhs; but all this is too weak a bottom; for when they wil[1] both Ministers & people will be Independent. 93

Again it is evident that even when there are certain "Presbyterian" leanings, e.g. the "consociation of churches", the system is quite ineffective because it is not an orderly system and can be disregarded when it does not suit some minister or congregation to cooperate.

Colman wrote, perhaps to Principal John Stirling of Glasgow, wondering

how long our Congregational Methods will serve as we grow in numbers & in views.....Ye method we have been in & are in is this. In Our Churches none are admitted to ye Lords Table without being first propounded to ye congregation. [While I, myself, do not require it,] in most of our churches There is a written Relation [i.e. Church Covenant] required, & publicly read by ye Ministers.....

[In cases of discipline the] Pastors do....act more their own will & pleasure than if they had a Presbytery or Consistory of Elders of Council & authority with them. 94

Also, about 1720, Colman wrote to Scotland, mentioning the polity of the Scottish Church and saying:

I wish heartily that we were here under any like authoritative Regimen; but our aged Ministers have been ready to call it Apostacy in us to desire any such thing. Accordingly now we have not had a Synod, properly so called, these forty years [since the Synod of Savoy in 1680]. 95

He said that six or seven years before, a convention of the ministers of the province voted to ask for the calling of a Synod, but that Increase Mather ("ye Aged Dr. Mather") "alone opposing it we could not obtain one". Mather was afraid that the ministers would go away from Congregationalism "to ye Presby[terian] discipline

93 Ms. letter, WL, Vol. XX, no. 25.

94 Ibid., no. 18b.

95 Ibid., no. 23.

& government". 96

In a letter of June 1725, Colman wrote to Robert Wodrow:

I fully agree with you that our Congregational Bottom is narrow & unreasonable, & I know of no such Dominion to be claimed by churches [i.e. congregations] over their Ministers.....[With regard to a Council of many congregations] our principle is that such a venerable Body have power only to advise & to give counsel. 97

But the most telling revelation of Colman's Presbyterianism came from a young Scot who had run away from home, crossed to New England, married a girl there, had a child, and was 'disowned' by his wealthy father who was an influential layman in the Church of Scotland. Finally the father, Colonel John Erskine, asked Robert Wodrow if he could strike some kind of reconciliation with the young man, Patrick, who then lived in Boston. Against this background a correspondence arose between young Erskine and Wodrow. Erskine wrote on October 1, 1716:

This place [Boston] is at great loss for want of a settled Presbyterian Mintr., & many are deprived of ye benefite of ye Sacrament, by it, who don't care to go through yr Forms for being Church members, qch is by reading in ye middle of ye Congregation, on Sunday a long Scroll containing a sort of confession of ye Sins. [The people are] hoping ye Genll Assembly [of the Church of Scotland] will take yr case into yr considera.^o. & supply ym agt next Summer qch would be very acceptable to ye people here of yt persuasion. 98

The next year, on December 9th, Colman wrote to Wodrow about Erskine:

A Brother in law of his who is gone over to ye Church of England here had infused into Mr. Erskin[e] some Prejudices against us, that he must come into a particular Congregational Church-covenant in order to the Baptism of his child. I easily satisfied Mr. Erskine that it was never practic'd in our Assembly [i.e. congregation] for we are entirely upon the Presbyterian foot so far as our...Congregational Churches will admit of it. 99

On December 20, 1718, Erskine wrote to Wodrow, saying that while Colman and a very few others omitted the necessity of parents entering into a Church Covenant

96 Ibid.

97 Ibid., Vol. XXI, no. 54.

98 Ibid., Vol. XX, no. 9.

99 Ibid., no. 13.

before the baptism of their children, in almost all of the congregations

it is imposed as an essential qualification, for receiving the Sacraments.....

Besides, their [sic] are a great many oyr [i.e. other] inconveniencys wch we bye under from the Independants & wch can be no oyr wise remedied than by a minr of our own persusion, wch is earnestly desir'd by all our Country men here.....[Benjamin Colman] is the only Minr. that comes near presbyterian Principles. 100

Patrick Erskine finally returned to his native Scotland.

The letters of Cotton Mather to Wodrow strike a quite different note.

Everything is fine, he says in a letter of December 1712; "The differences between presbyterian and congregational, is hardly known in our churches." 101 He has almost poetic praise for the Church of Scotland, "a church which I believe ye gloriouse Lord will [honor?] as ye aple of his eye, and ye dearly beloved of his soul". 102 And in a later letter he tells Wodrow that "The Church of Scotland has Appeared unto me as the most illustrious that is to be seen upon the face of the earth". 103

In a letter of August 6, 1718, Mather writes that many Scottish ministers have settled in the New England congregations, and also,

We are comforted with great Numbers of our oppressed Brethren, coming over from the North of Ireland, unto us. But that which adds much to our comfort is, that, they find so very little Difference in the managements of our churches from theirs and yours, or w[ould] count it next unto none at all. 104

The contradiction between Erskine (and Colman) on the one hand, and Mather on the other is obvious. A letter of Benjamin Colman to Wodrow in June of 1725 would seem to substantiate this even further:

100 Ibid., no. 18.

101 Ibid., no. 2.

102 Ibid.

103 Ibid., no. 16.

104 Ibid., no. 15.

Our gentlemen of Scotland, that are Inhabitants here, goe off strangely to the Chh. of England. Strangers from great Britain love one anothers company, & draw one another off. 105

We may conclude that there was a general cleavage between Colman, especially, and some few of his friends on the one side; and most of the other ministers, especially the older ones, led by Increase Mather, on the other. Colman was a Presbyterian in ordination, inclination, and practice (so far as he could go in Massachusetts). Cotton Mather seemed to be caught in between his own preference for a more presbyterian polity and his father's intransigence on the subject. Any supposition that Benjamin Colman was an influence upon the original American Presbytery toward any form of Congregationalism must fade in the presence of these facts. We cannot be certain of the origin of all of the seven ministers of the Presbytery when it was formed; but, as we have attempted to show in the case of Jedidiah Andrews, even if some others were from New England, that fact surely can not allow us to infer their 'Independency'. 106

We quoted Briggs' statement that the original Presbytery "was chiefly a meeting of ministers for ministerial exercise". 107 He gathered this from a

105 Ibid., Vol. XXI, no. 54.

106 From all the evidence available, the following can be stated with certainty about the nationalities of the first seven ministers of the original Presbytery, meeting in the spring of 1706:

Francis Makemie--Ulster Scot

John Hampton--Ulster Scot

George McNish--Scot

Jedidiah Andrews--New Englander

Samuel Davis--probably from Ireland, either Ulster Scot or Irishman from the Dublin area. From his name it is possible that he was a native Welshman who migrated to Ireland.

Nathaniel Taylor--uncertain, possibly New Englander

John Wilson--uncertain, possibly New Englander or Scot

If we include the young man who was ordained by the presbytery in December of the same year and whose final trials and ordination make up the first extant minutes of the presbytery, we add:

John Boyd--Scot

107 Briggs, op. cit., p. 143.

letter of Francis Makemie, written on March 28, 1707 from Philadelphia, to Benjamin Colman. In the letter Makemie said that he had been in Philadelphia

to attend a Meeting of Ministers, we had formerly appointed here; and were only Seven in number, at first, but expect a growing number: Our designe is to meet yearly, and oftener, if necessary, to consult the most proper measures, for advancing religion, and propagating Christianity, in our various Stations, and to maintain Such a Correspondence as may conduce to the improvement of our Ministeriall ability by prescribing Texts to be preached on by two of our number, at every Meeting.....¹⁰⁸

Even Trinterud rejects such an interpretation as Briggs gives here.¹⁰⁹

It is obvious that the basic purpose of the Presbytery was to form a judicatory that would explore the best methods of making the Gospel effective "in our various Stations". Some¹¹⁰ have suggested that Makemie's use of the term "Meeting of Ministers" implied that the group was very loosely organized. This is completely to ignore the fact that Makemie was referring to the Presbytery in terminology with which he was familiar. In Ulster, a number of the presbyteries, beginning in the 1650's, were called "Meetings".¹¹¹ At the last meeting of the Presbytery of Laggan, Makemie's home presbytery, before it was persecuted out of existence for nine years, we find the following entry: "St. Johnstown July 13, 1681. The Meeting see it fit to lay aside their ordinary business at this extraordinary meeting.....".¹¹²

We have discovered fresh evidence in the Wodrow Letters that attempts to portray John Hampton, one of the founders of the original Presbytery, as basically

¹⁰⁸ Photostatic copy of original ms. letter. Also, printed in Briggs, op. cit., pp. xlix-1.

¹⁰⁹ Trinterud, The Forming of An American Tradition, op. cit., p. 30.

¹¹⁰ For example, Cf. Armstrong, Maurice W., "English, Scottish, and Irish Background of American Presbyterianism, 1689-1729," JPH, XXXIV, p. 4.

¹¹¹ Reid, J.S., History of the Presbyterian Church in Ireland, Belfast, 1867, II, pp. 204-205.

¹¹² "A Transcript of the Entries in the Minutes of the Presbytery of Laggan", op. cit.

sympathetic to a "Heads of Agreement" polity rather than to classical Presbyterian polity are false. When James Anderson, ¹¹³ a Scotsman who came to the colonies in 1709, wrote to Principal John Stirling of Glasgow, on August 8, 1717, he gave the letter to Hampton, then pastor at Snow Hill, Maryland, to carry with him to Great Britain. Anderson said in a postscript:

This, I design shall come, att least to England by ye hands of the Revnd Mr. John Hampton one of our brethren here, whose necessary businesse & exegencies calls him home to Brittain for some time, who, if yow see or hear from him, can acquaint yow more fully of these & other things relating to us. ¹¹⁴

In the body of the letter Anderson wrote to Stirling:

[In a previous letter] I gave yow a small account of my arrivall & progresse in this American world, of the number of minrs who in these parts meet in a presbytery: As to our proceedings in matters of publick worship & discipline, (as I then acquainted yow) we make it our businesse to follow the directory of our moyr [i.e. mother] ye church of Scotland as near as the circumstances of these parts will allow. ¹¹⁵

When Briggs reproduced this letter in his work ¹¹⁶ he omitted a postscript, written by Hampton, himself. It is nearly three months since Anderson wrote the letter, and Hampton has finally given up waiting for his ship to sail; he plans for the letter to reach Stirling by some other means. Here, keeping in mind what Anderson has said, we reproduce Hampton's note:

Wicomoco River on board the
Cockermouth of Whitehaven
October 27th 1717

This day I came on board to cary my things on shoar having altered

¹¹³ Anderson (Cf. Infra, pp. 94-¹⁰⁰) became minister in New York City and could be termed a 'rigid' Presbyterian.

¹¹⁴ WL, Vol. XXII, no. 116.

¹¹⁵ Ibid.

¹¹⁶ Briggs, op. cit. pp. lxxiii-lxxvi.

my Resolution of going to Europe this season The year being so far advanced that being very wary dare not venture a Winter voyage, after having waited about three months for the Ships Sailing. Of this I thoughtfit to Inform you lest you sho'd think it strange not to hear from me in Europe. I heartily Joyn with what Broth. Anderson has write and remain...Honor'd & Revnd Sir

Your unworthy Brother
& most humble servant

John Hampton 117

There can now be little doubt about Hampton's sentiments. It should be pointed out that Hampton and Makemie had worked together extremely closely: they both were from the same presbytery in Ulster; the church in which Makemie had preached at Burt, Ireland in April of 1682 had Hampton's father as its pastor; Hampton, along with McNish, had returned to the colonies with Makemie in 1705; and Hampton was the one minister who accompanied Makemie on his historic trip when they both preached and both were arrested in New York. Here Hampton "heartily" confirms what Anderson has written.

C. Conclusions

From all these considerations we conclude that the debate centered on the formation of the original Presbytery has been, in the main, a hollow one. We must disregard the extremists on both sides of the question, while at the same time begin to draw out our own inferences from the evidence. Obviously, much of the nature of the original Presbytery can be understood only in retrospect, from the vantage point of later developments. But we can state our argument thus far:

1. The original Presbytery was not founded with any thought of jure divine Presbyterianism. All the members of the presbytery appear to have been broad-minded in their understanding of the Church. They sought to cooperate with those who would cooperate with them, seeing the difficult and demanding conditions of the "American wilderness". In this sense the Presbytery was an expedient action,

117 WL, op. cit.

arising from the need for church order and not from any desire to set up a model of church polity. The original Presbytery was not some Minerva, springing into existence fully developed.

2. Yet, while the Presbytery was no carbon-copy of a precisely ordered European classical presbytery, it was not a 'compromise' with Congregationalism. It was a presbytery in the fullest sense that conditions would allow. There is no indication whatever that the founders had any difficulty deciding between Presbyterianism and Congregationalism. They were Presbyterian-inclined who needed a presbytery for them to become truly Presbyterian; but this presbytery could not take on any rigidly pre-conceived or fixed form. It had to be indigenous if the church were to be indigenous. It might, therefore, be termed an "empirical presbytery", and its genius lay in the fact that it was not formed under the official tutelage of any one European church. It took the best materials at hand and shaped them into an organization best suited for its native conditions. But that blessing was also its greatest bane, for it would have to hammer out this polity on the anvil of unrest and even of schism.

3. The development of orderly polity, though not without a great measure of disorder in the process, had taken place most fully in Scotland; it was this form, along with its applications in Ulster, that was most familiar to the founders. They would keep this image at least in the 'back of their minds' as their organization began and would attempt to retain and reshape those points which were most valuable to a broad Presbyterianism in general and to an American Presbyterianism in particular.

4. The Presbytery differed from Scottish polity mainly in that it began from the 'bottom up'. Rather than a fairly powerful General Assembly establishing its smaller courts to create an orderly system, the Presbyterian form in America began with the smallest area judicatory. This was to play a tremendously significant part in the development of a new polity.

We now are prepared to examine the authority exercised by the new Presbytery as it attempted to order the life and work of the colonial church.

CHAPTER THREE

The Authority of the Original Presbytery

At its founding the original Presbytery had seven members, all of whom were located on the Atlantic seaboard. Jedidiah Andrews was minister at Philadelphia; John Wilson at New Castle, Delaware; Samuel Davis at Lewes, Delaware; Nathaniel Taylor at Patuxent, Maryland; while Makemie, John Hampton, and George McNish served the congregations in Maryland which Makemie had founded. At its extreme the Presbytery covered 175 miles, but most of the ministers lived within fifty to seventy-five miles of one another.

During the eleven years of its existence the Presbytery held twelve meetings, eleven of them the annual stated meeting and, in the first year after its beginning, what appears to have been an adjourned meeting. This latter meeting was in December of 1706, to ordain John Boyd. Subsequent ordinations were carried out by committees of the Presbytery.

As we have seen, the minutes of all these meetings are extant, except those of the first stated meeting held sometime in the Spring of 1706, and those of the first part of the above-mentioned adjourned meeting. The 1707 meeting was held in March, the 1708 and 1709 meetings in May, and those of the remaining years in September. The Presbytery met every year in Philadelphia, except in 1713 and 1715 when its meeting was in New Castle, Delaware, and the meetings were generally long, although they usually included a weekend when no official business was transacted. From 1707 through 1716 one meeting lasted three days, three lasted four, one lasted five, two lasted six, one lasted seven, and two of the meetings lasted eight days.

At the beginning of each meeting a "Moderator" and a "Clerk" were elected. The Moderators were: 1706, Makemie; 1707, Wilson; 1708, Davis; 1709, Andrews; 1710, McNish; 1711, Wilson; 1712, Andrews; 1713, John Henry; 1714, Andrews; 1715, Hampton; 1716, McNish. Except for one year, then, the Moderator was

an original member of the 1706 presbytery. The Clerks were: 1707, McNish; 1708, name omitted from minutes; 1709, Joseph Smith; 1710, Hampton; 1711, Andrews; 1712, David Evans ¹; 1713, James Anderson; 1714, Anderson; 1715, Evans; 1716, Anderson.

A. The Presbytery's use of ruling elders

From its beginning the original Presbytery followed the Reformed practice of constituting itself with both ministers (teaching elders) and ruling elders. It is clear, therefore, that nearly all the congregations under the care of the Presbytery had some form of "Session" to govern its local life and discipline. There is no indication, however, that these ruling elders were "ordained" in the sense in which it later has been practiced. Yet these men were locally constituted, even if it was simply by congregational election, and were listed in the Presbytery minutes as "Elders", immediately after the listing of the "Ministers" present.

Some have argued that the First Church in Philadelphia was Congregationally organized. Whatever its exact internal organization at this time, it certainly had men who were termed "Elder" by the Presbytery; for nine consecutive years, from 1707 through 1715, Joseph Yard, a bricklayer, was Jedidiah Andrews' ruling elder representative from the Philadelphia congregation.

It has been suggested that at first, in 1706, the Presbytery had no ruling elders, but that they began to participate in 1707. ² This is supposed because the small ³ fragment that we have of the meeting of December, 1706, lists no

¹ At this time Evans was a candidate for the ministry. It is believed that this is the only time during the whole colonial period that one other than an ordained minister was elected either Clerk or Moderator of a higher judicatory. Apparently, no ruling Elder ever held either post.

² Cf. Thompson, Ernest T., Presbyterians in the South, Vol. I, Richmond, 1963, p. 23.

³ It contains only 126 words.

elders, while listing the ministers present (Makemie, Andrews, and Hampton); but this was an adjourned meeting, apparently only for the purpose of ordaining Boyd, and in such circumstances it was usual for few, if any, ruling elders to attend.⁴ It is also possible that the extant 1706 minute was for a committee of the Presbytery rather than for an adjourned meeting of the full body; the minute gives us no indication. Then, at the opening of the 1707 meeting, there were four ministers and four ruling elders, with no note of there being any innovation in the listing of elders as voting members of the Court. From this evidence we may safely conclude that ruling elders were members of the original Presbytery from its first meeting, in the spring of 1706. From 1707 to 1716 there was an average attendance at the Presbytery of seven ministers and five ruling elders.

Nevertheless, it appears that the elders were, during this decade, generally considered to be companions of their ministers. In the last year of its existence, 1716, the Presbytery was faced with a situation that had not before arisen for an elder was present, to represent his congregation, without his minister:

Mr. Edmundson being present as a representative of the congregation of Patuxent, and their minister absent, it was put to the vote whether the said Mr. Edmundson should act here as a representative notwithstanding the minister's absence, and carried in the affirmative, nemine contradicente.⁵

It appears from this vote that the same would have held true at previous meetings if the question had arisen. The Presbytery had not developed standard rules to deal with such matters, so certain details of its polity were worked out as it faced new situations.

⁴ There is every indication that when Elders were present at examinations for ordination or at the ordination itself they did not take part, this being considered a ministerial function.

⁵ Records, p. 42.

Apparently, there was an amount of diversity in the constitution of the local congregations. Some had Sessions, some "Committees of the Congregation", some Boards of Deacons,⁶ although the Session was by far the most common. Here new members were nominated by the minister and elected by the existing elders with the approbation of the congregation. Some congregations elected their elders for a term of one year, others for life.⁷ This annual election of ruling elders was the Dutch practice and had been the original Scottish mode. Apart from Joseph Yard, with his nine attendances, only four other elders ever attended the original Presbytery more than once: one was present five times, and three others were present twice. Thirty-five elders were present only on one occasion, representing their congregations.

Because of the diversity in its churches' organizations the Presbytery, at its 1714 meeting, passed the following regulation:

For the better establishing and settling congregations, it is ordered and appointed that in every congregation there be a sufficient number of assistants chosen, to aid the minister in the management of congregational affairs, and that there be a book of records for that effect, and that the same be annually brought here to be revised by the Presbytery.⁸

The following year there was this minute:

In pursuance of an act made last Presbytery appointing every minister to appoint assistants and session books, &c. and in regard diverse of the ministers have not complied with the designs of said act, it was therefore ordered, that the several ministers come with said books, and perform the other end of the said act as it is specified therein.⁹

The name "assistant" was common at the time to refer to a ruling elder; therefore

⁶ Cf. Nichols, Robert, H., Presbyterianism in New York State, Philadelphia, 1963, p. 12.

⁷ Trinterud, Leonard J., The Forming of An American Tradition, Philadelphia, 1949, p. 205.

⁸ Records, p. 37.

⁹ Ibid., p. 41.



any argument that "assistants" were not "elders" cannot be substantiated. Further, these orders of the Presbytery were passed without any dissenting vote, and while they were not immediately carried out in a few of the congregations (most certainly some of the new congregations in New York and New Jersey that had been Congregational), this apparently was from neglect rather than from conviction.

B. The Presbytery's control of ministers

During these formative years the Presbytery "learned to improve its internal organization, to exercise discipline, and to take episcopal oversight over its churches".¹⁰ Yet any attempt to prove that the Presbytery, from the beginning, did not actually exercise these functions of authority, is doomed to failure. From the outset, the Presbytery distinguished itself from a voluntary association by being a judicatory with a great deal of control over its ministers and congregations. We will show the extent to which this authority was exercised.

The earliest minute of the Presbytery, for December 27, 1706, stated:

Mr. John Boyd performed the other parts of his trials, viz. preached a popular sermon on John 1, 12; defended his thesis; gave satisfaction as to his skill in the languages, and answered to extemporary questions; all which were approved of and sustained.

Appointed his ordination to be on the next Lord's day, the 29th inst., which was accordingly performed in the public meeting house of this place [Freehold], before a numerous assembly; and the next day he had the certificate of his ordination.¹¹

It is clear that the Presbytery had full control over Boyd's ordination, with power to accept or reject him for the ministerial office, and that it was the Presbytery alone which ordained, granting him a certificate of this ordination.

At the second stated meeting of the Presbytery, in March of 1707, it was obvious that attendance was not a matter of individual choice. A letter from

¹⁰ Briggs, Charles A., American Presbyterianism, etc., Edinburgh, 1885, p. 158.

¹¹ Records, p. 9.

Samuel Davis was read to the court, explaining his absence from that and the preceding meeting; his reasons were considered, and "were not sustained by the Presbytery".¹² Further, it was "Ordered, that a letter be writ, and sent to Mr. Samuel Davis in the name of the Presbytery, by Master John Wilson, requiring him to be present at our next meeting in this place."¹³ In 1709, it was "Ordered, That no members of this Presbytery, upon any whatever pretence, do depart or leave the Presbytery, without the meeting be broke up, or at least leave be asked and had from the Presbytery."¹⁴ And two years later when Morgan and Van Vleck were absent without excuse, the Presbytery ordered the clerk to "write to them to reprehend them for their absence".¹⁵ At this same meeting it was recorded that John Henry's letter to the Presbytery, explaining his absence from the meeting, was sustained; but the Presbytery ordered the Moderator to "write to him, and signify that his excuse was sustained with difficulty".¹⁶ In 1710 "Mr. Morgan has obtained leave to return home on sufficient reasons offered."¹⁷

In 1707 Makemie and John Wilson were appointed to preach on texts which had been assigned them at the previous stated meeting. Thus began the Presbytery's following of the Scottish custom of Presbyterial exercises, working through consecutive verses of Scripture. In the eleven years of its existence the

¹² Ibid.

¹³ Ibid.

¹⁴ Ibid., p. 16.

¹⁵ Ibid., p. 21.

¹⁶ Ibid.

¹⁷ Ibid., p. 18.

Presbytery moved in these preachings from Hebrews 1:1 to Hebrews 2:1! At the 1711 meeting James Anderson "was defective in not delivering his Presbyterial exercise, was censured for his defect, and appointed to deliver it next meeting".¹⁸

The Presbytery took care to ascertain that those whom it received as members had been regularly ordained. John Henry was admitted in 1710 only after he had "given due satisfaction by [written] testimonials to the Presbytery".¹⁹ The same procedure was followed during that meeting with Nathaniel Wade and Paul Van Vleck (on Van Vleck's case Cf. Appendix I, pp.356-8). In 1713, when Howell Powell asked to be received as a member,

The Presbytery was so well satisfied with what was offered in his behalf with respect to his ordination, &c. that it was agreed to admit him as a member, with advice to him to procure further credentials from some eminent ministers in England known to some of the members of the Presbytery, within a year's time, and that till then it shall be free to him to exercise his ministry in all its parts where Providence shall call him, but not fully to settle as a fixed minister until the expiration of the said time.²⁰

Samuel Pumry, minister of the congregation at Newtown, Long Island, presented himself to the Presbytery for admission as a member and was received, after having promised "subjection to the Presbytery, in the Lord".²¹ And when Malachi Jones, from Wales, asked to be received as a member, "the Presbytery taking his affair into consideration, and being very well satisfied as to his ordination and other qualifications, did heartily accept of his offer, and accordingly admitted him".²²

For the better supervision of their members the Presbytery in 1710

¹⁸ Ibid., p. 22.

¹⁹ Ibid., p. 17.

²⁰ Ibid., pp. 32-33.

²¹ Ibid., p. 41.

²² Ibid., p. 37.

Ordered, That the ministers and elders of the meeting come prepared for the future to give a true and impartial account how matters are mutually betwixt them, both with regard to spirituals and temporals. ²³

And in 1711 it was recorded that

Inquiry was made of the several ministers, touching the state of their congregations and of themselves, with relation thereto; and also of the several elders, not only of the measures taken to support the ministry, but of the life, conversation, and doctrine of their several ministers, and report was given to satisfaction for this time. ²⁴

By 1715 it could be recorded that "Inquiry was made concerning the respective affairs between ministers and their congregations, as usual." ²⁵ The Presbytery saw as one of its functions the inquiry into the ministries of its members, and this was to be a pattern followed somewhat extensively by some of the later presbyteries during the colonial period.

With regard to the disciplining of ministers, the Presbytery, upon reports that Van Vleck was a bigamist, ordered him to cease his ministerial functions until the matter was cleared up. It later came to light that he was guilty. In 1715 it is recorded that "Mr. Andrews and Mr. McNish made report concerning Van Vleck, that he is run out of the country, and that they, having writ to Holland, according to appointment, had not yet received any answer." ²⁶

But the most obvious case of disciplinary action, with the Presbytery using its full powers, came in the case of Nathaniel Wade and the congregation at Woodbridge, New Jersey. As we have noted, Wade was admitted as a member of the Presbytery in 1710; yet it had had dealings with him and his congregation at least two years prior to his admission. Wade had been ordained in Connecticut

²³ Ibid., p. 18.

²⁴ Ibid., pp. 21-22.

²⁵ Ibid., p. 40.

²⁶ Ibid.

to minister in Woodbridge and had formed the congregation by January of 1707/8; but the people were greatly dissatisfied with him, so much so that they appealed to the 1708 meeting of the Presbytery. The court appointed supplies for the congregation, if they desired them, and wrote to the ministers in Connecticut about the situation:

.....We find by divers letters that have passed between you and sundry persons in Woodbridge, that you are not unacquainted with the confusions and distractions arising from the accession of Mr. Wade to be the minister of that town, and the aversion of a considerable part of the people to the accepting of him as such..... Moreover, as you have been employed in Mr. Wade's fixing there, and we hope with sincere aims at the good of the place.....we humbly conceive you are in duty bound in a special manner to put to your helping hand to rescue them from the miserable inconveniences that now they labour under..... 27

Wade was admitted as a member of the Presbytery, "having satisfied, by letters and testimonials, and personal arguing, that his proceedings have been such as to give just ground for his acceptance". 28 Then the Presbytery wrote two letters to Woodbridge, one to the group that adhered to Wade and the other "To our Christian friends that are at present dissatisfied with Mr. Wade." In this latter letter the Presbytery indicated that Wade had "freely and fully submitted himself to the judgment and discipline of the Church according to Presbytery". They also said to these people that "you do professedly own this judicatory". 29

At the 1711 meeting the Presbytery reversed a censure that Wade had put upon two of his members and even wrote out a statement which Wade was required to read publicly in Woodbridge, indicating the action which it had taken. 30 Four days later, at the same meeting, Wade told the Presbytery that he felt that

27 Ibid., p. 13n.

28 Ibid., p. 17.

29 Ibid., p. 19n.

30 Ibid., p. 22.

it would be best for all if he were removed from the pastoral charge of Woodbridge; after none too lengthy consideration the Presbytery agreed. It then wrote to the congregation, telling them of Wade's desire and the Presbytery's agreement that he should leave. They said:

...our reverend brother Mr. Nathaniel Wade, has of himself, freely and willingly, for the glory of God and the good of poor Woodbridge, (as he and we both do hope,) demitted and resigned all pastoral relation unto, and interest in the whole people of Woodbridge; so that he is not any longer to be looked on by you, but as a transient minister or occasional supply. We have, therefore, appointed him to be your present supply, until you can, by the majority of the votes of such as contribute to the maintenance of a minister, provide yourselves with such an one, as we hope you will be unanimous in, and the Presbytery approve of at our next meeting. ³¹

All appeared to have been concluded well, until Wade left the Presbytery and returned to Woodbridge, where he seems to have had a change of heart. The Presbytery had arranged for the coming of George Gillespie, a young candidate from Scotland, about whom Principal Stirling of Glasgow had had some correspondence with Cotton Mather. Mather had heartily recommended him for Woodbridge, hoping that he would be able to make peace, for, most certainly, Mather and the other New England Puritans who had been involved in the settlement of Wade felt a large amount of responsibility for the situation. When the people of Woodbridge were called together to consider Gillespie, Wade publicly announced that he was still fully their pastor. As a result of this unexpected turn, the Woodbridge congregation appealed for the direction of the Presbytery.

At its 1712 meeting the Presbytery had come to the end of its Christian patience. It stated the history of the situation ³² and then went on fully to exercise its authority:

We, therefore, in the fear and name of our great Master, do appoint and ordain that the said Mr. Wade do no longer exercise his ministerial office at the town of Woodbridge, or among the people thereof, unless allowed by the Presbytery hereafter, but that he forthwith, and without resistance, directly or indirectly, give place to some other whom God in his providence may send..... ³³

³¹ Ibid., p. 24n.

³² Ibid., pp. 27-28.

³³ Ibid., p. 28.

The Presbytery took seriously its functions in supervising the candidates for the ministry who were under its care. We have seen, in the first extant minute, what was required of John Boyd prior to his ordination. After Boyd, the Presbytery had eight candidates on trial whom they ordained (Joseph Smith, George Gillespie, Robert Wotherspoon, John Bradner, Hugh Conn, Robert Orr, John Thomson, and John Pierson) and one (Samuel Gelston) who was under trials with the original Presbytery, but who was ordained in April of 1717 by the newly-formed Presbytery of Long Island.

The trials for these men were not always specifically detailed in the minutes, but we can see the basic requirements for their ordination. It is clear that each candidate, prior to ordination, had to preach at least one sermon, submit a thesis in Latin, undergo an examination in theological matters, and be examined in Greek and Hebrew. It is also probable that he was questioned extemporaneously on his knowledge of the English Bible and further in "other parts of learning", although what these "parts" were is not specified. We have details with each ordination, with the exception of that of Thomson, who was ordained following the last meeting of the Presbytery, the record of the examination not being reported back the following year to the new Synod; and that of Conn, where a five-member committee was appointed to ordain him, "after being satisfied with his ministerial abilities".³⁴ There is no question but that these trials included essentially the same parts assigned to the other candidates.

There was one further candidate, under the care of the original Presbytery, who must be considered separately, for he was the only one who actually received his training and education under its direction. In 1710 the Presbytery was informed that a layman, David Evans, was publicly teaching and preaching among his fellow-Welsh in the Great Valley of Delaware. The Presbytery unanimously

³⁴ Ibid., p. 39.

agreed that he "had done very ill".³⁵ They then determined that Evans should be placed under the direction of the Presbytery in order to acquire the "necessary literature to prepare him for the work of the ministry"; and in order to do this he was directed to "lay aside all other business for a twelve month, and apply himself closely to learning and study, under the direction of Mr. Andrews, and with the assistance of Mr. Wilson and Anderson".³⁶

In 1711 Evans was examined as to his progress and was allowed to preach until the following year "under the direction and inspection"³⁷ of the three members previously appointed. During the 1712 meeting those supervising him reported "that he had for the time, made considerable proficiency; whereupon it was voted, whether he should be ordained before the next Presbytery, according to the people's desire, and it was carried in the negative".³⁸

Sometime after the 1712 meeting Evans went to Yale and completed his studies there, receiving a degree and returning to preach at the Welsh-Tract congregation, still under inspection. At the 1714 meeting of Presbytery a formal call was presented from this people, asking that Evans now might be ordained as their regular pastor, and this being approved by the Presbytery, a committee of five ministers was appointed to perform the task at Welsh-Tract, after further examinations. This the Committee did, requiring of him, prior to his ordination, a Latin thesis, a sermon, examination of his knowledge of Greek and Hebrew, and questions in theology. He was ordained on November 3, 1714;³⁹ therefore,

³⁵ Ibid., p. 18.

³⁶ Ibid.

³⁷ Ibid., p. 25.

³⁸ Ibid., p. 28.

³⁹ Ibid., p. 38.

more than four years after his irregularity was first considered, he was ordained by the Presbytery, which in the intervening years took a constant interest in and supervision over his progress. But the Presbytery would not begin to entertain the thought that educational requirements should be lowered in order to obtain badly needed ordained ministers. Throughout this four-year process both Evans and his congregation submitted fully to the Presbytery's authority and refused to question this control even when, midway through the process, the court rejected a request for Evans' ordination.

It has sometimes been supposed that the Presbytery cared little or nothing about installing pastors, and that this is evidence of a lack of presbyterial authority. It is true that when men who were already pastors of what had been independent congregations (this was especially true on Long Island) were received as members of the judicatory, the Presbytery did not send a committee to install them. This obviously was because the Presbytery regarded them as already settled and that their admission to the court was sufficient. Further, when candidates were ordained, it was done upon their having received a call processed by the Presbytery. The ordination was carried out in the particular congregation, the Presbytery considering under these circumstances that 'installation' was implicit in the act of ordination. So, for example, when the Presbytery ordered the ordination of Hugh Conn at Baltimore, it was stated that the committee appointed "should solemnly by prayer, fasting, and imposition of hands, ordain him unto the work of the ministry, among the above-said people....." ⁴⁰ But it was the practice of the Presbytery (and this was to continue throughout the colonial period) occasionally to receive ordained ministers as members before they had a call, thus enabling them to minister until the time that an acceptable call to a particular congregation was presented. In every such case, except

⁴⁰ Ibid., p. 39.

that of George McNish,⁴¹ there is record of the Presbytery actually sending a committee to install. Two different terms for this action are used in the minutes: "inauguration", in the case of John Hampton,⁴² and "admission", in the cases of John Henry⁴³ and Howell Powell.⁴⁴ In light of this, Trinterud's statement, "The ministers assumed charge of the pastorate solely by action of the local church,"⁴⁵ is disproved.

C. The Presbytery's control of congregations

We have already seen that the Presbytery appointed an annual examination of its ministers and elders in order to determine conditions in the particular congregations; each year, first the minister, then his elder, would make report before the Presbytery. The elder was required to indicate if his pastor was being adequately cared for in "temporals" and if the pastor was faithfully fulfilling his tasks. When further action on any of these congregational matters was called for the Presbytery had no hesitancy in taking it. In 1708 it was ordered, "That Mr. Taylor write to the people of Monokin and Wicomico, exciting

⁴¹ Yet Sprague, William B., Annals of the American Pulpit, etc., Vol. III, New York, 1860, p. 13, says that "Sometime in 1711, he was actually installed pastor of the church in Jamaica." Trinterud, op. cit., p. 68, argues that there was a lack of presbyterial authority, seeing that the Presbytery never installed McNish at Manokin. This would have been a rather unique 'installation' since McNish had refused their call.

⁴² Records, p. 11.

⁴³ Ibid., p. 18.

⁴⁴ Ibid., p. 36.

⁴⁵ Trinterud, op. cit. The Heads of Agreement had said only "That in so great and weighty a matter as the calling and choosing a pastor, we judge it ordinarily requisite, that every such church consult and advise with the pastors of neighboring congregations". The Cambridge and Saybrook Platforms.....and The Heads of Agreement..... Boston, 1829, p. 127. Even a most cursory reading of the Heads of Agreement will show no similarity with the authority exercised by the original American presbytery.

them to their duty to pay what they promise to Mr. McNish." ⁴⁶ The same year the Presbytery wrote to Snow Hill, "requiring their faithfulness and care in collecting the tobacco promised by subscription to Mr. Hampton". ⁴⁷

The details and execution of the call of a congregation to a minister were handled exclusively by the Presbytery. In 1713 a call from Monokin and Wicomico for the services of Robert Lawson, "was presented to the Presbytery by James Caldwell, which being offered to Mr. Lawson by the moderator, he took it into consideration.....". ⁴⁸ And in 1716, when the Presbytery was still struggling to settle a pastor at Woodbridge, it was stated that the Presbytery was "very well satisfied with the proposals made to Mr. Pierson [John Pierson, a candidate] for his settlement among them, and do judge if Mr. Pierson make any other or higher demands upon that people, his demands shall be accounted unreasonable.....". ⁴⁹

The Presbytery spent a large part of its meetings in the consideration of problems within and between the congregations under its care. By far, Woodbridge was the one congregation which involved the Presbytery's time more than any other, and Hodge goes so far to say that that congregation "gave the presbytery more trouble than all the rest put together". ⁵⁰ But there was a number of other churches whose circumstances called for the judgement and ruling of the Presbytery. In 1707 Francis Makemie was ordered by the Presbytery to write to the Reverend Alexander Coldin, minister of Oxnam in Scotland, "to give an account of the state and circumstances of the dissenting Presbyterian interest among the

⁴⁶ Records, p. 13.

⁴⁷ Ibid., p. 11.

⁴⁸ Ibid., p. 33.

⁴⁹ Ibid., p. 45.

⁵⁰ Hodge, Charles A., The Constitutional History, etc., Philadelphia, 1851, I, p. 75.

people in and about Lewistown, and to signify the earnest desires of that people, for the said Mr. Coldin's coming over to be their minister". ⁵¹

It is obvious that the congregations under its care had a rather high view of the powers which the Presbytery could exercise. The people at White Clay Creek, in Delaware, worshiped with the New Castle congregation, but began to desire their own church. In 1708 a letter was read to the Presbytery,

sent by the people of and about White Clay Creek, in New Castle County, importing their desire and petition to the Presbytery, to have the ordinances of the gospel administered with more convenience and nearness to the place of their abode, for the great advantage and ease to their several families, promising withal due encouragement to the minister that shall be appointed thus to supply them. ⁵²

That same day

was also read a letter from several persons in the town of New Castle, wherein they crave that the people of White Clay Creek may not be suffered to set up a meeting house in the country, that their meeting house and congregation in New Castle may not be damaged by this rupture of their fellow members of White Clay Creek. ⁵³

Two days later the Presbytery ruled "That the people of New Castle and the country, should not be divided by setting up two separate meetings." ⁵⁴ In 1714 it was questioned whether certain people in the Great Valley to whom Evans had been ministering "should be looked upon as a part of the church and congregation of the Welsh-Tract, or a distinct body by themselves, and it was carried by the Presbytery that they be esteemed a distinct society". ⁵⁵ In 1709, when the Presbytery was notified of some difficulties between the New Castle congregation and their supply, John Wilson, a letter was written telling the congregation that under

⁵¹ Records, p. 10.

⁵² Ibid., p. 11.

⁵³ Ibid.

⁵⁴ Ibid., p. 12.

⁵⁵ Ibid., p. 37.

present circumstances Wilson was the only man the Presbytery could offer as a supply. The Presbytery wrote: "And therefore, we entreat, may require you in the Lord, to concur with us." ⁵⁶ And when the Presbytery was dealing with the Woodbridge situation it stipulated that in calling a minister only those in the congregation who had subscribed for his support could vote, and that a majority vote would carry. ⁵⁷

Acceptance of the authority of the Presbytery was as explicit for new congregations as it was for new ministers. In 1716 it was recorded that

A call from the people of South-Hampton, on Long Island, to Mr. Gelston, wherein the said people do subject themselves to us in the Lord, as a Presbytery, being presented to us in the name of their representatives, we did tender it to the said Mr. Gelston, and he accepted it. ⁵⁸

The question of financing travel to presbytery meetings arose early in American Presbyterianism. At the 1716 Presbytery John Henry's ruling elder was absent, and when the Presbytery asked the reason, Henry indicated that in the poor condition of his people his elder could not afford to pay for the trip out of his own pocket, but he said that there were proposals in his congregation to take a collection to defray such expenses of an elder at Presbytery. The Presbytery agreed that this would be a good plan. ⁵⁹

In 1715 the Presbytery was faced with a situation in the Patuxent (Marlborough), Maryland church. Apparently the congregation had a disproportionately large number of Deacons, with resultant friction between the Diaconate and the church's session, for the Deacons were attempting to exercise an authority not

⁵⁶ Ibid., p. 15n.

⁵⁷ Ibid., p. 24.

⁵⁸ Ibid., p. 44.

⁵⁹ Ibid., p. 43.

vested in their office. The Presbytery wrote a long letter, calling for peace and unity, in which they said:

We apprehend that the disproportion between the number of your elders and deacons, may occasion some uneasiness in your session, but hope you will find it no hard matter to prevent any ill consequence in this. We need only represent unto you the ends and institution of Scripture deacons, and that there is no juridical power allowed them in the Scripture. ⁶⁰

In this the Presbytery "expect your ready compliance". The letter concluded:

Lastly, we expect your acquiescence in our last year's act, touching sessions and session books, which we presume you know to be agreeable to the laudable practice of the best reformed churches. ⁶¹

It is quite clear from this letter that the Presbytery had decided views regarding Presbyterian polity. The following year, 1716, it was recorded: "The letter from the people of Patuxent, in answer to one from us last year, was read...to our great satisfaction." ⁶²

The Presbytery took seriously the examination of session books, and we have noted the 1714 order calling for an annual revision of these records. This meant that the Presbytery assumed the authority to sit in judgment over the decisions of local sessions. In 1716, at its last meeting before forming itself into a Synod, the Presbytery ordered:

With respect to session-books, mentioned in our last year's minutes... they [shall] be brought into and revised by the respective Presbyteries, to which they shall after this time, according to our preceding appointment, belong. ⁶³

Therefore, while such rules were not delineated at the very beginning of its existence, they certainly were implicit; and less than ten years of developing experience made them explicit. The Presbytery sought to formulate such specific regulations, and in 1715 appointed

⁶⁰ Ibid., p. 42n.

⁶¹ Ibid. The Heads of Agreement had allowed for authority to be exercised in one place only: the local congregation. "In the administration of church power, it belongs to the pastors and other elders of every particular church, if such there be to rule and govern, and to the brotherhood [i.e. the entire congregation] to consent according to the rule of the gospel". The Cambridge and Saybrook Platforms.....and The Heads of Agreement, op. cit., p. 126.

⁶² Ibid., p. 44.

⁶³ Ibid., p. 46.

that it be recommended to all and every member of this Presbytery, that betwixt this and our next meeting they may think of, and prepare, what they may judge most necessary to be presented to our Presbytery for the common or particular good of all or any of us. ⁶⁴

But because of the Presbytery's forming itself into a Synod the following year, the results of this order, if there were any, were not entered in the minutes.

One of the most vital responsibilities of the original Presbytery, in relation to its particular congregations, was the supplying of vacancies. At the 1707 meeting it was set down as a general rule "That every minister of the Presbytery supply neighbouring desolate places where a minister is wanting, and opportunity of doing good offers." ⁶⁵ It was noted in the following year that this regulation had been "complied with and practised by the ministers". ⁶⁶ In the next nine years nine ministers and candidates received among them sixty-four definite assignments to supply at six different towns or areas. Actually, many more supplies were assigned, but because they were indefinite as to date or place it is impossible to enumerate them. It is clear from the records that a very high percentage were fulfilled.

D. The Presbytery's use of committees

An interesting feature of the polity of the original American Presbytery is the wide use it made of committees, to which it would from time to time delegate authority. Generally the committee appointed would be ad hoc. Thus in 1707 what appears to have been the Presbytery's first 'committee' was appointed, when Andrews and Boyd were ordered to prepare for the next day of the meeting "some overtures to be considered by the Presbytery". ⁶⁷ The following year three

⁶⁴ Ibid., p. 42.

⁶⁵ Ibid., p. 10.

⁶⁶ Ibid., p. 11.

⁶⁷ Ibid., p. 10.

members were assigned to confer, concurrent with the meeting of Presbytery, with Joseph Smith and a delegation from the congregation at Cohanzy, regarding his settlement there.⁶⁸ Another committee was appointed that year to "read over the letters from Woodbridge concerning the differences betwixt that people and Mr. Wade, and make a summary report thereof at the next meeting".⁶⁹

The actual term "committee" was first used in 1710 when "A committee consisting of Mr. Wilson, Andrews, Hampton, [is] appointed to meet at two o'clock, to inquire into Mr. Morgan's and Van Vleck's affair, and prepare it for the Presbytery."⁷⁰ At that meeting another committee was appointed, still only to report back to the Presbytery, but this time able to transact more than specifically prescribed business:

A committee consisting of Mr. Henry, Mr. Anderson, and Mr. Wade, [is] appointed to prepare and bring in overtures to the Presbytery, and also [to] take cognizance of whatever may be laid before them, to prepare it for the Presbytery.⁷¹

A very significant task was assigned to a committee in 1713, when it was

Ordered, That Masters McNish, McGill, Henry, and Gillespie, apply the thirty pounds promised to this Presbytery by the Rev. Thomas Reynolds, of London, to what members of the Presbytery they think fit.⁷²

The Presbytery had used committees from the beginning; its starting to use the word "committee" in 1710 indicated no different understanding by the Presbytery of the functions or authority of such a group. This is clearly indicated by the minutes for 1711, where three men are appointed to inspect David Evans' proficiency in learning, yet are not referred to by any name. But three days

⁶⁸ Ibid., p. 11.

⁶⁹ Ibid., p. 12.

⁷⁰ Ibid., p. 17.

⁷¹ Ibid.

⁷² Ibid., p. 34.

later it is recorded that "The committee gave in their report concerning David Evan[s], and do approve of his hopeful proficiency." ⁷³ During the lifetime of the Presbytery seven of these committees were appointed, meeting during the sessions of the regular Presbytery; in each case they acted in the fashion of a present-day presbytery committee, reporting their findings back to the Presbytery for determination by the entire body.

But the original Presbytery made a more extensive use of the committee-system. From 1707 to 1716 eleven different committees were appointed which, in their functions, approximated to what would be called 'commissions' of presbytery. These groups were vested with the full authority and power of the Presbytery to carry out specific responsibilities. Yet they were still ad hoc committees, meeting during the year between the annual plenary sessions; the original Presbytery never had a Commission--one specified group of men that could determine in any matter brought before it. The committees which met during the year had full determinative power only in that particular matter for which the Presbytery had commissioned them.

Of the eleven committees of this type ten either were assigned to installations of ordained men or to receive further trials of candidates and, if they so determined, to ordain them. So, for example, in 1713,

The business of Mr. Wotherspoon and the people of Apoquinimy came again into consideration, upon which the Presbytery appointed as follows, That Masters Andrews, Anderson, Powell, Jones, and Gillespie, do manage in the affair between Mr. Wotherspoon and the people of Apoquinimy, that after a formal call presented before them by the said people of Apoquinimy, they, at their own discretion, appoint the said Mr. Wotherspoon to pass his trials before them, and that if they shall be fully satisfied as to his qualifications, they proceed to his ordination, and settlement among that people. ⁷⁴

In addition to Wotherspoon, Joseph Smith, George Gillespie, David Evans, Hugh

⁷³ Ibid., p. 23.

⁷⁴ Ibid., p. 34.

Conn, Robert Orr, John Thomson, and John Pierson were ordained by committees of the Presbytery. The eleventh committee met with the congregation at Woodbridge and their prospective minister, Pierson, to remove some obstacles which stood in the way of his settlement there.

There is recorded only one exception to this regularity. At the 1714 meeting it was reported that in March of that year three of the Presbytery's ministers, Davis, Hampton, and Henry, "upon good and sufficient reasons", had taken it upon themselves to license John Bradner. Bradner had been a candidate, but did not have authority to preach, and the Cape May congregation was without a minister. Bradner was willing to supply them and rather than let the people be without services for half a year, these ministers examined him and found him prepared to preach. It must be noted that they did not ordain him. Only after the congregation had presented the call to the annual meeting of the Presbytery, which approved it, was a committee assigned to examine him still further and ordain him. The three ministers who had licensed Bradner submitted what they had done to the Presbytery, "which was approven". This was the only such irregularity, and it was kept as 'regular' as it could have been under the circumstances. ⁷⁵

Other work was delegated, but not to committees as such. The Presbytery engaged itself in extensive written correspondence, each letter being assigned to one, two, or three members, who after writing the letter would read it to the whole Presbytery for approval, before it was sent. Seeing its importance, the Presbytery wisely voted this order of 1709: "That every letter sent by the Presbytery be inserted into a book appointed by the Presbytery for that purpose, and that this be done by Mr. Andrews." ⁷⁶

⁷⁵ Cf. Ibid., p. 36.

⁷⁶ Ibid., p. 14. These letters are printed, together with the minutes, in the Records.

Many of the letters were written to other judicatories and interested individuals in Scotland, Ulster, England, and Dublin, generally asking for ministers and money. Some were written to New England, as in the case of Nathaniel Wade. But, as we also have seen, a number were written to the particular congregations under its own care; there is record of twenty-seven such letters. These, plus ten letters to nine of its ministers, and fourteen letters overseas and to other parts of the colonies, means that in its eleven years the original Presbytery wrote at least fifty-one official letters.

E. Conclusions

It is clear from this examination of the minutes of the original Presbytery that while the judicatory had no detailed constitution or written rules as it began, it immediately revealed itself to be following along the lines of a classical presbytery rather than a voluntary Congregational association. Member ministers and congregations were expected to acknowledge and abide by the decisions of this corporate body; they did not withdraw if a decision or an order of discipline seemingly was unfavorable to them. This is all the more striking since the Presbytery exercised a rather strong authority over its ministers and congregations. There is absolutely no sign of indifference to Church order.

While every church did not have a fully developed session, it was the accepted and expected norm toward which each was to strive. Ruling elders were an integral part of the meetings of Presbytery, and their attendance at these meetings was quite good.

The Presbytery often delegated full presbyterial power to committees, especially for the act of ordination, the members of such committees being appointed by the Presbytery and never by local congregations. It was the Presbytery, alone, which had, and exercised, the power of examination, licensing, and ordination of candidates, the reception of new ministers and churches, and the settling and dismissing of ministers from their parishes. A pastoral relation was fixed or dissolved by the

Presbytery, and, further, the Presbytery exercised the power of dividing and uniting congregations.

The main concern of the Presbytery was for the life and growth of its particular churches, and in sending out its members and candidates into vacancies and unsettled areas it was acting as a missionary body, aware of its own responsibility for evangelization. Its polity was not rigid and unyielding, but growing and adaptable to the frontier conditions in the "American wilderness". And into such conditions it molded the basic responsibilities and powers of a 'higher' judicatory.

American Presbyterianism began with a presbytery. In eleven years, when it had grown to such an extent as to pose problems for effective supervision, there was no difficulty in forming several presbyteries, under the authority of one synod. And as American Presbyterian polity began its movement toward maturity, it would necessarily be keeping a general pattern in mind. As a Presbytery letter to the Synod of Glasgow said, in 1710:

.....we have unanimously judged it, (knowing none so proper to apply unto, and repose our confidence in, as yourselves, our Reverend Brethren of the Church of Scotland, whom we sincerely honour and affectionately esteem as fathers,) our duty, for strengthening our interest in the service of the gospel, to address you for your concurrence with us in so great and good a work. ⁷⁷

⁷⁷ Ibid., p. 20n.

CHAPTER FOUR

The Polity of the Synod of Philadelphia, 1717-1740

By 1716 it had become clear to the Presbytery that changes were needed in its organization. The number of ministers had grown from seven to seventeen,¹ Loetscher estimating that the total communicant membership of the Presbytery was 3000,² and Nevin that there were forty congregations.³ Because of this growth it is usually suggested that it was due to large numbers that the Presbytery changed itself into a Synod, composed of several presbyteries. This certainly was true; but it is also important to note that what was to become a basic principle of Presbyterianism in America was being implemented: that a presbytery should not be too large to supervize the life of the Church within its bounds.

After the division into smaller presbyteries, a more flexible and efficient order emerged. Ministers were not called upon to travel many miles to a pro re nata meeting of the one large Presbytery. The authority and jurisdiction of the Church was closer to its immediate problems and opportunities; these smaller, area presbyteries made the missionary effort easier and much more effective. Baird's words carry real significance in relation to this action:

With the presbytery the organisation of a Presbyterian church is complete. So long as the number of ministers and churches is so small that they can conveniently meet at the same time and place, there is no need of any superior body. The formation of synods and a general assembly becomes necessary only when the church is too large to be comprised under one presbytery.⁴

Four presbyteries were organized by the original Presbytery at its 1716 meeting: the Presbyteries of Philadelphia, New Castle, Snow Hill, and Long Island.

¹ Actually there had been nineteen additions. Deaths and removals account for the other nine.

² Loetscher, Frederick W., "The Adopting Act," JPH, XIII, p. 338.

³ As mentioned in Slosser, Gaius (ed.), They Seek a Country, etc., New York, 1955, p. 39.

⁴ Baird, Robert, Religion in the United States of America, Glasgow, 1844, pp. 536-537.

The ministers in the Presbytery of Philadelphia were to be Jedidiah Andrews, Malachi Jones, Howell Powell, Robert Orr, John Bradner, and Joseph Morgan; of New Castle (Maryland and Delaware) James Anderson, Daniel McGill, George Gillespie, Robert Wotherspoon, David Evans, and Hugh Conn; of Snow Hill (the eastern shore of Maryland) Samuel Davis, John Hampton, and John Henry; of Long Island George McNish and Samuel Pumry and any neighboring ministers whom they could gather with them.

Three of the presbyteries started to function at once, but the fourth, Snow Hill, apparently never met. This failure is not surprising, since Henry had died before the first meeting of the Synod, in 1717, and Hampton, because of constant poor health, had had to travel to Britain. In 1718 he asked for demission from the congregation at Snow Hill, since he "was not able to perform the office of a pastor to that people without apparent hazard of his life through bodily indisposition". Therefore, "the Synod, upon mature deliberation, having put the matter to vote, it was carried nemine contradicente, to accept of his demission, and to declare his congregation vacant, to the great regret of the Synod".⁵ Less than three years later Hampton was dead.

Between 1717 and 1740 the Synod erected five new presbyteries. Donegal (in Lancaster County, Pennsylvania) was formed in 1732; East Jersey in 1753; Lewis (Delaware and Maryland) in 1735; New York (merging East Jersey and Long Island) in 1738; and New Brunswick (from parts of New York and Philadelphia Presbyteries) in 1738.

A. A Case of mistaken identity: the relation of the authority of the Synod to its presbyteries

In forming itself into a synod in 1716, the Presbytery did so in the following way:

It having pleased Divine Providence so to increase our number, as that

⁵ Records, p. 53.

after much deliberation, we judge it may be more serviceable to the interest of religion, to divide ourselves into subordinate meetings or Presbyteries, constituting one annually as a synod, to meet at Philadelphia or elsewhere, to consist of all the members of each subordinate Presbytery or meeting for this year at least: Therefore it is agreed by the Presbytery, after serious deliberation, that the first subordinate meeting or Presbytery... meet at Philadelphia.....⁶

The time of the meetings was left to each presbytery, but it was "Ordered, That a book be kept by each of the said Presbyteries, containing a record of their proceedings, and that the said book be brought every year to our anniversary Synod to be revised".⁷

With nothing more specified, there was a real danger of confusion regarding such questions as who would receive, ordain, and discipline ministers and regulate the life of local congregations in their relation to the total task of the Church. The basic question was left unanswered: Where was real judicial authority lodged: in the Synod or in its presbyteries?

1. The Synod's control of ministers

While the responsibility for ordination and discipline generally was left to the particular presbyteries, the Synod would on occasion exercise it directly, with no apparent reference to the presbytery to which the minister belonged.

a. Ordination

During the twenty-four years under examination, the Synod itself ordained only two men. John Clement and William Steward, both probationers from Britain, were received by the 1718 session of the Synod, which then ordered a committee of ministers to ordain them before the next meeting. Their ordination was "appointed to be according to the usual methods....",⁸ and they were ordained in

⁶ Ibid., p. 45.

⁷ Ibid., p. 46.

⁸ Ibid., p. 52.

June of 1719.

In 1735 the Synod made plans to ordain a candidate John Tudor, from Goshen, New York. It was indicated that Tudor was ready "to submit to Presbyterian rules", and a committee was appointed to go to Goshen to ordain him, following his presentation of a Latin thesis and a sermon.⁹ But the following year the committee reported to the Synod that they had not ordained Tudor "because of his insufficiency".¹⁰

b. Discipline

There were few instances of the Synod taking the first judicial action in a case of discipline against one of its ministers. The session at Rehoboth made direct appeal to the Synod at its 1720 meeting regarding Clement, their minister. The Synod ordered that a committee go to Rehoboth, "with full power from the Synod to act in their names, and by their authority", to determine in the case. Until that time the Synod ordered "that Mr. Clement be suspended from the exercise of his ministry".¹¹ At the 1721 meeting the Synod resumed consideration of the matter, finding that since the committee met at Rehoboth there is "incontestable proof from several evidences [i.e. witnesses] who appeared before the Synod, that in the general, the carriage of the said Mr. Clement, had been unbecoming a gospel minister". Moreover, since the meeting of the committee, Clement had stated that he had confessed his immoralities to them

because he knew no other way to get out of their clutches. It also appeared by good evidence, that the said Mr. Clement, had been diverse times overtaken with drink, and chargeable with very abusive language, and quarrelling, and of stabbing a man. Whereupon the Synod seriously considering the premises, do, in regard to the honour of God and edification of his people, as well as for preventing the bad influence of his ill example, as also of his own conviction and reformation, suspend the said

⁹ Ibid., p. 116.

¹⁰ Ibid., p. 124.

¹¹ Ibid., p. 62.

Mr. Clement from the exercise of all and every part of his ministerial function, till the next meeting of the Synod....¹²

Next year Clement was absent from the Synod, and his suspension was continued.

The Synod directed that if any of its presbyteries "do hear that the said Mr. Clement does any where officiate as a minister, they shall write to the people he officiates among, to inform them of the said Mr. Clement's lying under the censure of the Synod".¹³ But Clement disappeared.

In 1728 charges were presented to the Synod against Joseph Morgan, apparently by several members of his congregation. Unfortunately, the minutes for the Synod's determination in the matter only whet our curiosity:

As to the fourth article, 1. The Synod do bear their strongest testimony against the practice of judicial astrology. 2. That the Synod think they have sufficient evidence that Mr. Morgan is far from approving that art..... 4. And after all, the Synod cannot clear Mr. Morgan from imprudence and misconduct in making the two alleged experiments of that kind, if the reports be true, were his ends never so good and laudable.

As to the fifth article, although the Synod do not approve promiscuous dancing, yet they judge it a clear indication of the captious and querulous spirit of Mr. Morgan's accusers, that they offer such a complaint against him.¹⁴

The Synod said that "if there be any other evidence against Mr. Morgan..., as is alleged by some of his accusers, they may offer such evidence to the Presbytery of Philadelphia, to which Mr. Morgan belongs".¹⁵ Nine years later Morgan was again the subject of disciplinary action at the Synod, but this was on a censure issued originally by the Presbytery of Philadelphia.

Perhaps the most noted case of discipline against a minister was in the affair of Samuel Hemphill. The Presbytery of Strabane reported on June 19, 1734 to the

¹² Ibid., p. 66.

¹³ Ibid., p. 70.

¹⁴ Ibid., p. 91.

¹⁵ Ibid.

General Synod of Ulster that "they have in tryals for ordination Mr. Saml Hemphill, who designs to pass into the Plantations in America".¹⁶ Hemphill was ordained immediately, so quickly, in fact, that he was able to be present at the 1734 meeting of the American Synod, in September. Being received by the court, he settled in Philadelphia and soon became an assistant pastor in Andrews' congregation. His sermons were masterly. They were delivered with verve. But those with a careful ear began to note two things: First, much of what they heard seemed to border closely on heresy; second, much of what they heard was strangely familiar.

Both realizations were correct. The people were hearing such things as: "Original sin [is] as ridiculous as imputed righteousness"; and, "good words put men in God's way and reconciles God to them".¹⁷ The sermons were those of well-known Arian preachers, and Hemphill, with the aid of a keen memory, was passing them off as his own.

Andrews took the affair directly to the Synod's Commission, which met to determine the matter on April 17, 1735.¹⁸ The Commission unanimously agreed "that Mr. Hemphill be suspended from all parts of his ministerial office until the next meeting of our Synod, and that it be referred to the Synod to judge when met whether the suspension shall be continued or taken off, or whatever else shall be judged needful to be done...".¹⁹

¹⁶ Records of the General Synod of Ulster, Belfast, 1897, Vol. II, p. 189.

¹⁷ Quoted in Webster, Richard, A History of the Presbyterian Church in America, etc., Philadelphia, 1857, p. 420.

¹⁸ Cf. Ibid., pp. 417-418 for a summary of the charges made against Hemphill at this meeting.

¹⁹ Quoted in Briggs, Charles A., American Presbyterianism, etc., Edinburgh, 1885, p. 231n.

Philadelphia went into uproar. Hemphill had been exceedingly popular and had a number of influential friends, including Benjamin Franklin,²⁰ who held a pew in the church. Franklin stood by him to the end, printing (and writing) tracts of defense for Hemphill and charges against the "Pharisees" on the Commission. The Commission too hastily published the minutes of the meeting, in order to defend their action.

When the Synod met in September of 1735 it determined to judge and settle the entire affair and thus summoned Hemphill to appear. But instead of appearing before the Synod, Hemphill sent a letter:

To the Rev. members of the Synod:

By way of answer to the notification which I received Saturday last,

²⁰ Franklin wrote: "About the year 1734, there arrived among us from Ireland a young Presbyterian preacher named Hemphill, who delivered with a good voice, and apparently extempore, most excellent discourses, which drew together considerable numbers of different persuasions, who joined in admiring them. Among the rest I became one of his constant hearers, his sermons pleasing me as they had little of the dogmatical kind but inculcated strongly the practice of virtue, or what in the religious style are called "good works". Those, however, of our congregation who considered themselves as orthodox Presbyterians disapproved his doctrine and were joined by most of the old clergy, who arraigned him of heterodoxy before the synod in order to have him silenced. I became his zealous partisan and contributed all I could to raise a party in his favour, and we combated for him awhile with some hopes of success. There was much scribbling pro and con upon the occasion; and finding that tho' an elegant preacher he was but a poor writer, I lent him my pen and wrote for him two or three pamphlets. As is generally the case with controversial writings, tho' eagerly read at the time, were soon out of vogue, and I question whether a single copy of them now exists.

During the contest an unlucky occurrence hurt his cause exceedingly. One of our adversaries, having heard him preach a sermon that was much admired, thought he had somewhere read that sermon before, or at least a part of it. On search he found that part quoted at length in one of the British reviews, from a discourse of Dr. Foster's. This detection gave many of our party disgust, who accordingly abandoned his cause and occasioned our more speedy discomfiture in the synod. I stuck by him, however, as I rather approved his giving us good sermons composed by others than bad ones of his own manufacture, tho' the latter was the practice of our common teachers. He afterwards acknowledged to me that none of those he preached were his own; adding that his memory was such as enabled him to retain and repeat any sermon after one reading only. On our defeat he left us in search elsewhere of better fortune, and I quitted the congregation, never joining it after, tho' I continued many years my subscription for the support of its ministers." Franklin, Benjamin, Autobiography, Berkeley, 1949, pp. 120-121.

I have only to observe, that the dispute between the Synod and me being made public to the world, which was first begun by the commission, what I have at present to offer to the Synod, is contained in an answer to the vindication of the reverend commission now in the press, and will be speedily published, and that I despise the Synod's claim of authority. Your humble servant, SAMUEL HEMPHILL.

Monday morning.

P.S. I shall think you will do me a deal of honour, if you entirely excommunicate me. ²¹

With the reception of this letter, the Synod wasted no time in reading Hemphill out of the Church, declaring him "unqualified for any future exercise of his ministry within our bounds, and that this be intimated to all our congregations by each respective minister. Approved nemine contradicente". ²² Hemphill disappeared from the minutes, and nothing more is known of him.

An interesting side-light to the story of Samuel Hemphill comes from his native Ulster. At the very time that the storm was at its height in Philadelphia, in June of 1735 a case ^{was} brought before the General Synod of Ulster involving a minister, Patrick Vaunce of the Presbytery of Letterkenny. Vaunce had detected something of the potential difficulties in Hemphill's preaching and had written to a brother-in-law of his (Vaunce's) who was a member (perhaps a ruling elder) in a congregation within the American Synod. He had done this, he said, "with a view to prevent the mischief which might accrue to that Infant Church by Mr. Hemphill's preaching such Doctrines there". ²³ The Presbytery of Strabane wanted to have Vaunce tried by the Synod of Ulster for having written the letter, since, although he knew that Strabane was planning to ordain Hemphill, Vaunce had never lodged a judicial complaint with that body. The Ulster Synod referred the matter to the Presbytery of Letterkenny for a trial, but this never took place, undoubtedly

²¹ Records, p. 117.

²² Ibid.,

²³ Records of...Ulster, op. cit., p. 208.

because the Ulster Synod was soon to hear from "that Infant Church" regarding Hemphill.

The American Synod's reaction to Hemphill was as strong as his to them. On the afternoon of the same day on which Hemphill's letter was read before the Synod it was voted to disapprove of "the late too common, and now altogether unnecessary practice of some of the Ulster presbyteries in ordaining ministers sine titulo, just prior to their coming to America. It is felt that by this practice the Ulster church is "depriving us of our just rights, viz: that we unto whom they are designed to be co-presbyters, and among whom they design to bestow their labours, should have just and fair inspecting into their qualifications". The Synod plans to notify Ulster of this "by writing home to the General Synod". Moreover, the Synod determines to ask the Irish church to send with their ministers and probationers who are migrating to America not only official "Presbyterial credentials" but also personal letters of recommendation from Irish ministers who are known to the American clergy. This practice should be followed, "lest we may again be imposed upon by men of his [Hemphill's] stamp, though furnished with all the formalities of Presbyterial credentials". Finally,

The Synod do agree that no minister ordained in Ireland sine titulo, be for the future received to the exercise of his ministry among us, until he submit to such trials, as the Presbytery among whom he resides, shall think proper to order and appoint. And that the Synod do also advertise the General Synod in Ireland, that the ordaining any such to the ministry sine titulo, before their sending them hither for the future, will be very disagreeable and disobliging to us. ²⁴

c. Admission

It was not clear to a minister or candidate from outside the boundaries of the Synod whether he was, on arrival, initially to apply for admission to the Synod or to one of its presbyteries. Both courses of action were followed and accepted. At the opening of the Synod in 1717 six new ministers had been added, thus bringing

²⁴ Records, p. 119.

the total of those in service to twenty-three. From then until 1740 there was an addition of fifty-nine ministers, and it is worth noting the ways by which they became members.

Eleven ministers, all from Britain, were received directly by the Synod before they had sought any relation with a particular presbytery. Henry Hook, William Tennent, and Samuel Young were received in 1718; John Orme in 1720; Robert Laing in 1722; John Wilson in 1729; William Bertram and John Cross in 1732; and Hemphill, Robert Jameson, and James Martin in 1734.

The Synod of 1718, in receiving Samuel Young, gives an example of the usual method of admission:

Mr. Samuel Young, minister of the gospel, presenting his credentials from the Presbytery of Armagh, met at Donaghmore, in the county of Down, in the kingdom of Ireland, to this Synod; they were cordially approved, and he admitted a member nemine contradicente.²⁵

Later, at the same meeting, it was recorded that "The Synod recommended it to Masters Young and Tennent to apply themselves to what Presbytery within the bounds of the Synod they should think convenient".²⁶ Even when we understand that "recommend" had a much stronger meaning in those days than it has now, it is clear that the first obligation of these new members was to the Synod rather than to a particular presbytery.

When James Moorhead applied for membership in 1720 he produced credentials of his ordination in England,

which being viewed and deliberated upon by the Synod, were unanimously voted not valid; and more especially a writing produced by him as a testimonial of his ordination. This, together with other reasons, viz: his irregular and factious carriage in his own country, (as appeared by his own confession, and the personal knowledge of several members of this Synod,) together with his scandalous and disorderly behaviour since he came into America, (as manifestly appeared,) has caused the Synod to

²⁵ Ibid., p. 52.

²⁶ Ibid., p. 54.

refuse him admittance into their number, and to lay a charge upon all their members to give him no encouragement as a minister, but to advertise all as they have opportunity, and occasion to beware of him.

Ordered, That an extract of this minute, with relation to Mr. Morehead, signed by the clerk, be given to every Presbytery belonging to this Synod. 27

At the August 1, 1721 meeting of the Presbytery of New Castle, Moorhead was mentioned as "a wandering Imposter" who had been publicly disowned by order of the Synod the preceding year. Apparently he had been intruding into Gillespie's congregation; whereupon the presbytery appointed McGill to preach to those people for three Sundays, and to read to them the act of the Synod, warning them about Moorhead. 28

At the 1721 meeting of the Synod Moorhead was present again. The moderator, Jonathan Dickinson, "inquired of him, whether he would submit to the Synod or not, which he refusing, the moderator, in the name of the Synod, solemnly admonished him not to exercise the work of the ministry, upon pain of the highest church censure in case of continued contumacy". 29 After this, Moorhead disappeared from the records. 30

27 Ibid., p. 60.

28 Minutes of the Presbytery of New Castle, Vol. 1, p. 39; printed in JPH, XIV, p. 382. On July 16, 1723 Gillespie, in a letter to Principal John Stirling of Glasgow, made this request: "I earnestly desire of you to write to the Presbytery of Jedburgh in order to know if ever one Mr. James Moorhead was received among ym in ye Station of a Minister and if so then w[ha]t certainty They had of his ordination in England and let me know per first [opportunity]"

The foresaid is now in our bounds[;] the Testimonial of his ordination is supposed by our Synod to be but forged". W.L., XXII, no. 120. There is no mention of Moorhead in the minutes of the Presbytery of Jedburgh. (Cf. mss. records in RH).

29 Records, p. 66.

30 Unfortunately, Briggs, op. cit., p. 228n., confuses Moorhead with John Moorehead, who was born near Belfast in 1703. If he had presented himself to the Synod in 1720 he would have been only seventeen years of age. This fact, the difference in the spelling of the names, plus several other considerations (Cf. Blaikie, A., Presbyterianism in New England, Boston, 1852, pp. 62-63) definitely proves that these were two different men.

During this period only two ordained ministers were received by a presbytery prior to their becoming members of the Synod. Thomas Creaghead was received by the Presbytery of New Castle in January of 1724, and his name then appeared on the Synod's roll in September of the same year. The second minister was Hugh Carlisle, whom the minutes of Synod for 1735 indicate had been "admitted into New Castle Presbytery".³¹

Eight ministers became members of the Synod by virtue of the fact that they, being settled pastors of "Independent" congregations, submitted themselves and their churches to the jurisdiction of a presbytery and the Synod. These men, all New Englanders, were received as members of the Synod in the following years: Joseph Webb, 1720; Moses Dickinson, 1722; Noyes Parris, 1725; Nathaniel Hubbell, 1727; Ebenezer Pemberton, 1728; Daniel Elmer, 1729; Ebenezer Gould, 1730; and Eleazer Wales, 1731.

Pemberton's case was unique. Coming to the New York City church just after the great clash between Anderson and Dr. Nicoll (Cf. Infra, pp. 94-100) Pemberton was received into the Synod by a synodical committee that had been sent to settle several differences between the congregation and the Presbytery of Long Island. When the committee made its report to the Synod, the question was put "Whether the committee had authority from the Synod to consider the admission of Mr. Pemberton as a member of the Synod, without previously considering what the Presbytery of Long-Island had to offer in that affair. Carried in the Negative by a great majority". The Synod refused to recognize Pemberton as a member of the Synod by virtue of the committee's action, but proceeded to accept him at the meeting of Synod, "notwithstanding of all the irregularity that was in the accession of Mr. Pemberton to New York".³²

By far the greatest number of ministers was received after they had successfully sustained their trials before, and had been ordained by, one of the presbyteries.

³¹ Records, p. 114.

³² Ibid., pp. 89-90. Cf. p. 86.

Thus, thirty-four ministers became members of the Synod on the initiative of particular presbyteries. Of this number, six, Francis Alison, Samuel Black, Samuel Cavin, John Elder, Francis McHenry, and John Paul, had been received by the presbyteries as candidates from Britain.

There were seven instances of candidates for the ministry being received directly into the Synod, before having any relation to a presbytery. We have noted that Clement and Steward were received as probationers in 1718. The year before, at the Synod's first meeting, "Mr. Robert Cross, probationer, lately come from Ireland, having presented his testimonials, after reading thereof, the Synod did approve of the same, and recommended him to the Presbytery of New Castle for further direction".³³ Alexander Hutchinson, from Scotland, was received by the Synod as a probationer in 1722; in 1730 John Peter Miller, "a Dutch probationer, lately come over",³⁴ was admitted by the Synod, which then assigned him to the care of the Presbytery of Philadelphia. In 1736 the Synod received John Madowell from the Presbytery of Temple Patrick in Ulster, as a candidate; he was ordered to supply a new congregation for two months,³⁵ but there is no further record of him, and he never became a member of the Synod. So also Peter Finch was received as a candidate by the Synod in 1724, which then referred him to the Presbytery of New Castle; but his name does not appear again in the minutes.

In the period from 1717 through 1740 one other man requested the Synod to receive him as a candidate. In 1723 George Williamson indicated that he had a "call to the ministry". The Synod formed itself into an "interloquitur" (just the ministers, with no ruling elders present), and after considerable deliberation

³³ Ibid., p. 49.

³⁴ Ibid., p. 99.

³⁵ Ibid., pp. 123, 130.

they came to this judgement:

The ministers of the Synod having seriously and deliberately considered the above case, do, nemine contradicente, agree in judgment, that the said person has not any regular call that way; for though we are satisfied as to his piety and godly life, yet we think he wants [i.e. lacks] necessary qualifications required in the word of God for a gospel minister, and therefore advise him to continue in the vocation wherein he is called, and endeavour to be useful as a private Christian. ³⁶

The following year "The Synod having received a letter from George Williamson, expressing some dissatisfaction with the judgment of the Synod in his case last year, they appointed Mr. Andrews and Mr. Thomson to write a letter to him in answer to his.....". ³⁷ The matter was settled.

On four occasions ministers were members of the Synod without being members of a presbytery. This was true for Hampton and Davis during the few years before their deaths, since the Presbytery of Snow Hill, to which they were originally assigned, apparently never organized. It appears that Henry Hook was not a member of a presbytery until 1722, when he was joined to the Presbytery of New Castle. William Steward was a member of the Synod for four years before being assigned to the Presbytery of New Castle in 1722. ³⁸ All four of these instances took place quite early in the Synod's life.

d. Settlement in and dismissal from pastoral charges

It was unusual for the Synod itself to make or break pastoral relationships. Since Hampton had no presbytery to which to appeal it is not strange that in 1718 he petitioned the Synod to be dismissed from Snow Hill because of his ill health. ³⁹

³⁶ Ibid., p. 77.

³⁷ Ibid., p. 79.

³⁸ But Webster, op. cit., p. 371, says that Steward had waited during this period, as pastor in Somerset County, Maryland, "in the hope of forming a presbytery in the peninsula". Cf. Appendix III, pp. 388-389, for a letter of Steward, written in 1723, in which he describes his situation.

³⁹ Records, p. 53.

In 1733, when John Nutman indicated to the Synod that he was having a great number of difficulties in his charge, East Hanover, because of a threatened separation in the congregation, the Synod ordered the Presbytery of East Jersey to try to heal the differences. But in case that proves impossible, "it is this Synod's judgment, that a dismissal may be granted to Mr. Nutman from the people of East-Hanover, by the said Presbytery, upon his application for the same".⁴⁰ The Synod was not taking the action itself but was prescribing the course the presbytery should follow.

In 1737, when it appeared that Joseph Morgan, who had been suspended temporarily from exercising his ministry because of certain scandalous actions, would be reinstated, a large number of his congregation presented a representation to the Synod. It asked that if his suspension were taken off

he might not be reinstated as their minister: The Synod came to this result, that the people of Hopewell and Maidenhead be left at their liberty to entertain Mr. Morgan as their pastor or not, even supposing the committee appointed to meet on his affair...should see cause to restore him to the exercise of the ministry; only the Synod enjoins the people to pay to Mr. Morgan what arrears are due to him for time past.⁴¹

Only four calls to a pastorate were presented directly to the Synod from congregations. Two of the calls were in 1718, to Clement and Steward. The third was in 1726. While James Anderson was a member of the Presbytery of Long Island, a call from the Donegal congregation was presented for his dismissal from the people of New York City to become their pastor. The "Synod recommended said call to Mr. Anderson for his consideration about it".⁴²

The other call was the culmination of a drawn-out process to settle an assistant for Andrews' congregation in Philadelphia. In 1733 he asked the Synod

⁴⁰ Ibid., p. 106.

⁴¹ Ibid., p. 132.

⁴² Ibid., p. 84.

directly for such a minister, and the Synod agreed that if the congregation could support two ministers it would be acceptable. The following year the Synod considered the possibility of Robert Cross' moving from his pastorate in Jamaica to come to assist Andrews, but apparently Cross was not decided in the matter, and there were some in the Jamaica congregation who felt strongly that he should remain. It was suggested in the course of the negotiations that some of the members from Jamaica be given the opportunity to voice their reasons why Cross should not move, "that this congregation may not be cut out of the right that they have, according to our Presbyterian constitution, to offer their objections".⁴³ The matter was deferred until the next day, to give such an opportunity before the Synod "proceed to determine this momentous affair by vote".⁴⁴

On the following day,

The affair respecting Mr. Cross's transportation from Jamaica to Philadelphia reassumed. And the Synod being deeply sensible of the great importance of the present debate, appointed that a solemn prayer to God for assistance and direction be made before we enter upon the consideration of it, and another prayer before we proceed to a vote...and after the most critical examination of the affair, and the solemn imploring the divine assistance, the matter was put to vote, and carried against Mr. Cross's transportation.⁴⁵

At this same meeting Samuel Hemphill was received as a member, leading to his brief and unfortunate assistantship with Andrews.

At the 1735 Synod a portion of the Philadelphia congregation was given permission to form a separate congregation, and ^{at} the 1736 meeting they extended a call for Cross to become their pastor. The Synod presented the call to Cross, who immediately declared that he believed it his responsibility to remain in Jamaica; because of this and the fact that the Jamaica congregation did not know of this new turn of

⁴³ Ibid., p. 108.

⁴⁴ Ibid.

⁴⁵ Ibid., pp. 108-109.

events, the decision was postponed until the 1737 meeting. The Synod gave its reasons for the delay:

1st. That justice shall hereby be done to both congregations by this necessary delay.....

3rdly. This Synod will appear to act tenderly and conscientiously, and to avoid precipitancy on both hands.

4thly. During this intervening time, by Divine Providence, the aspect of these affairs may be so far altered and cleared, that the Synod may be able to determine, both to the edification and satisfaction of all parties concerned. ⁴⁶

When the matter was resumed in 1737 Cross "submitted himself wholly to the judgement of the Synod" which finally voted to "transport" him. ⁴⁷ Three days later the Synod, "coming to consider who shall instal[1] Mr. Cross to the new erection, do now appoint Mr. Andrews to do the same, and that from this time Mr. Cross and said new erection be joined to the Presbytery of Philadelphia". ⁴⁸ By the time of the installation, the group had decided not to separate from the First Church in Philadelphia; therefore, Cross was installed as assistant. ⁴⁹

The vast majority of calls and requests for dismissal were presented to the individual presbyteries and never required the attention of the Synod. Therefore, while the Synod assumed the right of presbyterial power in the settlement and dismissal of pastors from local congregations, it rarely was exercised.

⁴⁶ Ibid., p. 130.

⁴⁷ Ibid., p. 133.

⁴⁸ Ibid., p. 134.

⁴⁹ Strangely enough, the minutes of the Presbytery of Philadelphia for November 10, 1737, record that "The occasion of the Meeting of this Presbytery was the instalment of the Rd. Mr. Robt. Cross pursuant to an order of the Synod. In wch. affair Mr. Andrews presided...". (Mss. Minutes of the Presbytery of Philadelphia, [Vol. I], p. 50). While there was no order of the Synod for the presbytery to perform the installation, Andrews most certainly felt that it was a presbyterial function and one which he should not fulfill alone, even at the direction of the Synod. Perhaps, on the other hand, the Synod actually had intended the Presbytery of Philadelphia to conduct the installation, for at the 1738 meeting it is recorded that Cross "was installed since our last, according to the Synod's appointment". (Records, p. 137)

e. Censorship

There was one control that the Synod exercised over its ministers that would raise many a clerical hackle today. In 1735 the Synod agreed

that if any of our members shall see cause to prepare any thing for the press upon any controversy in religious matters, that before such member publish what he hath thus prepared, he shall submit the same to be perused by persons to be appointed for that purpose..... 50

Two committees were appointed, one for the area to the north, the other for the area to the south of Philadelphia. Each committee was made up of five ministers.

Three years later the Synod took another action of censorship. David Cowell and Gilbert Tennent had for some time been involved in a theological debate over "some important points of doctrine". It was

overtured, that this affair be considered by a committee appointed by the Synod, who shall be directed to converse with Mr. Tennent and Mr. Cowell together, that they may see whether they so widely differ in their sentiments as is supposed;....that Mr. Tennent and Mr. Cowell be both directed to refrain from all public discourses upon this controversy, and all methods of spreading it among the populace, until the committee have made their report to the Synod, and that no other member take notice of and divulge the affair. 51

Whether or not it was wise to require a synodical imprimatur and to silence public debates, the Synod showed itself most concerned that theological differences be dealt with in an orderly and judicial way--and that it had the power to insure that they would be. Theology was, to early American Presbyterianism, not simply an individual concern; it belonged to the whole Church, through its judicatories.

2. The Synod's control of congregations

A great deal of what has been said regarding the authority of the Synod over its ministers has revealed aspects of its controls over its congregations. Direct synodical action in relation to congregations was rare. Only twice did a

⁵⁰ Records, pp. 117-118.

⁵¹ Ibid., p. 140.

congregation make petition for the Synod to settle a pastor among them; both occasions were quite early in the Synod's existence. In 1719 there was a supplication "from the people of Patomoke, in Virginia, requesting the Synod's care and diligence to provide them an able gospel minister".⁵² The following year there was a similar request from Gloucester and Pilesgrave; the further consideration of this was referred to the Presbytery of Philadelphia.⁵³

a. Parish boundaries and membership in presbyteries

In 1727 the Synod directed that a new meeting house at Elk River must be built at least six miles from the old one and at least seven miles from any other Presbyterian church.⁵⁴ Two years later the Synod agreed to allow the new meeting house to be five and a half, rather than six miles, from the old. The following year, 1730, the Synod discovered that the order had not been carried out, and

came to this resolution, viz: that certain persons be appointed to perambulate the bounds and confines of Mr. Houston's and Mr. Gelston's congregations, and to make a representation of what discoveries they can make, in order to bring the matter of difference between those congregations to an amicable accommodation; and if Mr. Gelston's congregation will cordially encourage and support said persons appointed so to perambulate, and also submit to the judgment of the Synod in pursuance of said perambulation, well; but if Mr. Gelston's congregation will either not encourage, support, and assist said perambulation, and do not agree and submit to the judgment of the Synod in pursuance of said perambulation, then the said congregation from thenceforth, shall not be esteemed by this Synod as an orderly congregation, until they by testifying their repentance, give reasonable satisfaction to this Synod.⁵⁵

This was the only time during the period that the Synod fixed a congregation's bounds; in all other instances the matter was handled by the presbyteries.

On five occasions the Synod approved the moving of a congregation from the jurisdiction of one presbytery to another. Smithbury was given permission to

⁵² Ibid., p. 57.

⁵³ Ibid., p. 60.

⁵⁴ Ibid., pp. 86-87.

⁵⁵ Ibid., p. 97.

join the Presbytery of East Jersey in 1734; Turkey and Rocksitcus were transferred from the Presbytery of New Brunswick to the Presbytery of New York in 1739; and Tinnacum and Newtown were dismissed from the Presbytery of Philadelphia and joined to the Presbytery of New Brunswick in 1740.

b. Supplies

In 1721, when the Birmingham congregations asked the Synod for supplies, "that matter was referred to the Presbytery of New Castle".⁵⁶ It was comparatively rare for the Synod to make appointments for ministers to preach in local congregations; this was a function to be carried out by the individual presbyteries.

While the Synod made one hundred and three preaching assignments to vacant congregations during the period from 1717 through 1740, one hundred were concerned with only three congregations. Twenty-seven Sabbaths were assigned to be supplied in the Potomac area of Virginia, while four assignments were made to supply the congregations of the ministers when they went to Virginia. Forty-eight assignments were made to the new congregation in Philadelphia, before Cross came as minister and those people were reunited with the First Church. Four were made to supply in the absence of a minister who was supplying in Philadelphia. Seventeen preaching assignments were made for the Norrington congregation. Three other congregations received a synodical preaching assignment only one time each. Moreover, from 1724 through 1735 there was not a single assignment made by the Synod. In all, then, only six vacant congregations were supplied by the direct action of the Synod.

c. Collections

One important way that the Synod exercised authority over the congregations was in the collection of money for the total work of the Church. In 1719 a letter was directed to all the congregations, calling for a collection "to be sent yearly

⁵⁶ Ibid., p. 68.

to the Synod by their minister or elder...".⁵⁷ In the letter the Synod indicated that appeals had been made to Britain and Ireland for funds to help the American Church reach out to those "languishing in darkness and blindness", and that these appeals had met with success. It is unreasonable, said the Synod, for those of us in the colonies, who are able to contribute, "to hold our hands". The congregations were called upon to "cheerfully exert themselves for the glory of God and the good of souls".⁵⁸

d. Discipline

Congregations and individual members normally were disciplined by their presbyteries. There were about a dozen instances where an appeal was made to the Synod from a decision of a presbytery. In one such case, in 1719, Abraham Emmitt and two of his sons appealed to the Synod from a decision of the Presbytery of New Castle.⁵⁹ It seems that these men were stirring up trouble for their pastor, Gillespie, accusing him of "insufficiency as to ministerial abilities".⁶⁰ The Synod upheld the presbytery's decision, saying that "if in any thing the said Presbytery have failed as to their judgment in this affair, it is in too much lenity towards the appellants".⁶¹ Then the Synod imposed disciplinary action: "...it is Ordered, that the said appellants be discharged from the participation of the sealing ordinances of Christ, until they give satisfaction to the minister

⁵⁷ Ibid., p. 57.

⁵⁸ Ibid., p. 58n.

⁵⁹ Cf. Minutes of the Presbytery of New Castle, Vol I, pp. 20-21; JPH, XIV, p. 302.

⁶⁰ Records, p. 57.

⁶¹ Ibid., p. 56.

and session of their now present congregation for their offensive carriage".⁶²
 The Emmitts finally became reconciled fully to the Church, one of the sons, William, serving as an elder and representing his congregation at two subsequent meetings of the Synod.

Only very rarely did a congregation by-pass its presbytery to make a direct appeal to the Synod. We have noted one such occasion in the case of the Hopewell and Maidenhead congregations and Joseph Morgan (Cf. Supra, p. 86). In 1737 a number of the members of William Tennent's church at Neshaminy appealed directly to the Synod to have Tennent declared not their pastor. The previous year they had appealed from a decision of the Presbytery of Philadelphia, and the Synod had upheld the presbytery. When they now made this direct appeal to the Synod, the court answered that

the reasons advanced by the disaffected party of that congregation in their supplication, in justification of their non-compliance with the Synod's judgment in relation to them last year, and their desire to be freed from Mr. Tennent as their pastor, are utterly insufficient, being founded, (as appears to us,) partly upon ignorance and mistake, and partly, (as we fear,) upon prejudice. It is therefore ordered, that the moderator recommend it to said people to lay aside such groundless dissatisfactions, and return to their duty, which they have too long strayed from, otherwise the Synod will be bound in duty to treat them as disorderly.⁶³

A few disciplinary cases involving a local congregation were at first presented to the presbytery to which the congregation belonged, with the presbytery finding the problem so difficult or important that it took no action at all, but presented the matter to the following meeting of the Synod. One such case, one of the most complex and interesting faced by the Synod during the entire Colonial period, was the strange affair of John Nicoll, M.D.

New York City was an early Presbyterian battleground. The hectic history

⁶² Ibid., p. 57.

⁶³ Ibid., p. 133. Cf. p. 127.

of the Church in that city is a unique page in the development of American Presbyterianism. Francis Doughty and then Richard Denton (Cf. Supra, p. 9) had ministered to a group of Presbyterian Puritans in New Amsterdam during the mid-seventeenth-century. After Denton left for England about 1659 the group continued in an unorganized condition, with occasional visiting ministers, until 1717. One of these visitors, invited to preach on January 20, 1707 in a private home, was Francis Makemie. This act of worship began the swift course of events which led to Cornbury's recall from New York. Still the Presbyterian New Yorkers continued without a definite place of worship or a settled minister, worshiping in homes. In 1716 the beginnings of an actual congregation of about seventy members were made under the leadership of several laymen, and plans were laid for calling a minister and building a meeting house.

At a pro re nata meeting of the Presbytery of New Castle on September 20, 1717,⁶⁴ a call was presented for the services of a minister who had preached to the New York group earlier that year, James Anderson, minister at New Castle, Delaware. The call was presented to the presbytery by the representatives of the New York congregation, one of whom was Dr. John Nicoll. Anderson was a native of Scotland, born in 1678 and ordained in 1708. He had come to the colonies in 1710 under the sponsorship of the Synod of Glasgow and was received as a member of the original Presbytery on September 20th of that year, succeeding John Wilson as pastor at New Castle. He took up his duties in New York just as the Presbytery of Long Island, of which he now became a member, was being formed. Here began his intimate relationship with John Nicoll. Nicoll was from Great Britain, born about 1679, and probably a graduate of the University of Edinburgh. In 1718 he, Patrick McKnight, Thomas Smith, and Gilbert Livingston, who were also laymen in the congregation,

⁶⁴ Minutes of the Presbytery of New Castle, Vol. I, p. 6; JPH, XIV, p. 293.

purchased a lot on Wall Street, near Broadway, for the construction of a church building. In that same year, on April 18, the congregation received approval to worship in the City Hall while their church was being built. The building was soon begun, but the men were surprised to find that the project was much more expensive than they had at first expected.

At this point real trouble set in, as Smith and Livingston began to balk. This is the first clear indication of friction between what might be called the "New England element" and the "Scots element".⁶⁵ Work on the church was completed in 1720, but when Anderson and several others applied in the same year for a charter they were opposed not only by the Anglicans but by Livingston and Smith. The charter failed.

A week later Livingston and Smith complained to the Synod about the irregularity of the Presbytery of Long Island's action in settling Anderson as the New York pastor, but the Synod found nothing irregular in the procedure. Then Anderson's two antagonists complained about his preaching. Two of his sermons were read to the Synod, and while the court found no doctrinal problems, "they could wish that they had been delivered in softer and milder terms in some passages".⁶⁶

By this time Smith and Livingston had asked to be released from the bonds into which they had entered with McKnight and Nicoll for the building of the church. In 1722 the 'New England element' withdrew to form a separate congregation. With

⁶⁵ Six years later Nicoll said "that some who had hitherto appeared forward to promote the work not only withdrew their assistance, but vigorously opposed the same. Whether this proceeded from principle, they being independent in their persuasion, or from regard to their worldly interest, fearing the charge would amount to more than at first they expected, or from both, we do not determine. But a stop was put to this good work for the space of twelve months; during which time the walls, half raised, stood as a monument of ridicule to the enemies of our profession, who were not wanting [i.e. lacking] to make us their daily derision on this account". (Minutes of the General Assembly of the Church of Scotland, May 16, 1724).

⁶⁶ Records, p. 62.

support from the New England Congregationalists (which did not thereby strengthen their relations with the Synod) they secured the services of a young man, barely nineteen years old. After only nine months the young minister, Jonathan Edwards, left the break-off congregation to return to Connecticut. The 'dissenters' reunited with the main congregation on September 20, 1723; although the situation was uneasy, there appeared to be some unity of purpose.

During all this strife the problem of money loomed large. The congregation's debt grew, even though some money had been received in 1719 from two sources. The Synod allotted the church a tenth of what had been collected for the colonial Church by the Synod of Glasgow; yet this seems to have been for the support of the minister, rather than the building of a building. In that same year the government of Connecticut gave a small amount. These gifts were accepted gratefully, but nevertheless the congregational purse-strings opened on a very thin purse. The church sold bonds to finance its building, and gradually Nicoll took over the huge task of keeping the church's financial strings untangled.

For a time common problems kept many shoulders struggling under the heavy burden of debt. Patrick McKnight went to Scotland in 1722 to appeal for funds; he was followed the next year by Dr. Nicoll, who was quite successful in his appeals to the Church of Scotland. Apparently he received over six hundred pounds, which was to be applied to the debt which had been incurred by building the church. Nicoll had been sent on his mission for money with the full support of Anderson, who knew that in the Doctor he had a good friend and a faithful supporter of the congregation. Wrote Anderson in a letter of introduction for Nicoll to Principal Stirling of Glasgow: "We have therewith sent home, as our messenger, our Beloved and trustie friend and Brother Dr. John Nichols [i.e. Nicoll], one of our cheif members and representatives". He described Nicoll as "a gentleman of such noted piety and zeal for the interests of our Mediators Kingdom in these parts, I can with freedom recommend him as a person worthy of regard whose information may be

depended on as true and certain".⁶⁷ The victorious Nicoll returned in 1724 to the praise and admiration of the congregation and its minister. But suddenly a new problem arose, one that in two years would see the pastoral relationship between Anderson and the congregation dissolved.

Suspicion began to center around Nicoll because of his tight control over the church's records. George McNish had died in March of 1722 in possession of a bond for two thousand pounds, securing the church building for Presbyterian use. The bond had been signed by Anderson, Nicoll, and others in the congregation and given over to three ministers of the Presbytery of Long Island, of whom McNish had been one. Now the bond could not be found. To many in the congregation Nicoll was the prime suspect since, they claimed, only he would benefit from the loss of the bond. Those who had signed the bond had promised thereby not to alienate the mortgage on the grounds and church. Nicoll had used some of his own money to offset the church's debts, and therefore it was he who held the mortgage!

The accusations came to the surface early in 1725. The other men who had been involved in the financial transactions of the previous seven years came to believe that Nicoll had used the money he had received from Britain for his own purposes. Certainly it would appear that he was hesitant to pay outstanding bonds until he had an assurance that his personal expenditure for the church's debts would be repaid him. As fellow members hounded Nicoll he went more and more to the defensive and there was a growing rift between him and his pastor, Jonathan Dickinson, pastor at Elizabethtown, New Jersey and Robert Cross, who had succeeded McNish at Jamaica, were asked by Anderson and the others to intervene, but the efforts of Dickinson and Cross met with no success.

⁶⁷ W.L., XXII, no. 121.

While Anderson was a devoted man, he and the others allowed their suspicions to run to extremes. In the face of such accusations Nicoll refused to speak to them about the matter or, foolishly, even to let them see the accounts. This only aggravated them the more.

On May 18, 1726, the case against Dr. Nicoll was presented to the Presbytery of Long Island,⁶⁸ meeting at Cross' church at Jamaica. The matter was so involved and important that the presbytery, without taking any action, referred the entire affair to the Synod, which met four months later. The Synod disapproved of Nicoll's actions, "until we are otherwise informed".⁶⁹ Exactly a year later, at the 1727 Synod, Nicoll was present, laying before the court "A petition and other papers".⁷⁰ A committee appointed to deal with the matter brought in an overture indicating that the congregation at New York "have signified by their letter to this Synod, that they are fully satisfied with the Doctor's accounts and conduct... [Therefore] the Synod think they have no more to do in that matter, saving still the right and privilege of the representatives or others, hereafter to remonstrate their dissatisfactions, if they have any, in a regular way before Presbytery or Synod".⁷¹

But a further complication had arisen in that Nicoll had applied to Boston for a new minister while Anderson still served the church! Therefore, the Synod

⁶⁸ Cf. Appendix II, pp. 365-387, "A Representation of the Case betwix the presbyterian church of New York & Dr. Nicoll", etc. This document, along with the covering letter from Anderson, and an article comprised of much of the material in this section, has been published by the author. Cf. Schlenther, Boyd, "The Presbyterian Church of New York vs. John Nicoll, M.D.", JPH, XLII, pp. 198-215, 272-285.

⁶⁹ Records, p. 83.

⁷⁰ Ibid., p. 85.

⁷¹ Ibid., p. 86.

found that it had a good deal more to do in the affair than it had expected. In 1727 a committee of five ministers was appointed to meet at New York "to accommodate matters of difference between that congregation and the Presbytery of Long Island, and also any other differences that may be among themselves about their church settlement".⁷² This committee finally worked out an intricate settlement which paved the way for the ownership of the church property to be lodged with five ministers in Edinburgh, along with Nicoll.⁷³

Nicoll's action with regard to obtaining a new minister naturally aggravated the already sore relationship between him and Anderson to an unbearable degree. Indeed, the Doctor got his way; even when censuring Nicoll in 1726 the Synod gave Anderson "liberty to remove from New York",⁷⁴ and the congregation was given permission to call another minister "in an orderly way".⁷⁵ At that same Synod, on September 24th, the call was brought forward from the congregation at Donegal for Anderson. He accepted it and was installed by the Presbytery of New Castle in August of 1727. The minutes of that presbytery for July 25, 1727 strike an almost sad note when seen in relation to all that had gone before: "The Revd mr James Anderson lately of New-York desireing to be admitted a Member of this Presb: was Accordingly embraced."⁷⁶

⁷² Ibid., p. 87. This is a very unexpected minute when we remember what the Synod's reaction was, in 1728, to the Committee's receiving Pemberton as a member of the Synod. (Cf. Supra, p. 83). It demonstrates the confusion which existed regarding the relation of synodical and presbyterial spheres of authority. The reaction in 1728, the feeling that the Presbytery of Long Island should have been consulted by the Committee, shows that the Synod understood ministerial reception as a basic function of the presbytery.

⁷³ Cf. Records, pp. 89n.-90n.

⁷⁴ Ibid., p. 83.

⁷⁵ Ibid., p. 84.

⁷⁶ Minutes of the Presbytery of New Castle, Vol. I, p. 118; JPH, XV, p. 160.

There is no indication that the relation between Anderson and Nicoll was ever healed. As a matter of fact, the Synod in 1730 received a letter from Nicoll challenging Anderson's ownership of a piece of Communion linen. James Anderson died on July 16, 1740, still minister at Donegal. The Presbytery of Donegal, at their first meeting following Anderson's death, spoke highly of him, saying that "ye loss of... [his] company...we cannot but lament".⁷⁷ Anderson had been rather remarkable in one aspect of his churchmanship: in thirty-one years as a member of, first the original Presbytery, and then the Synod, he had missed only one meeting.

As for John Nicoll, he died on October 2, 1743. Pemberton said at the funeral: "These walls will be a lasting monument of his zeal for the house and public worship of God, in the erecting of which he spent a considerable part of his estate. While the Presbyterian Church subsists in the city of New York, the name of Dr. Nicoll will ever be remembered with honour, as one of its principal founders and greatest benefactor".⁷⁸

B. The Synod's internal organization

1. More power to the presbyteries

At the formation of the Synod the relationship of synodical and presbyterial powers had not been spelled out, and we have noted the confusion that was the natural consequence. While the Synod rarely exercised the presbyterial powers of ordination, admission, settlement, and dismissal of pastors, and the direct disciplining of ministers and congregations, there was enough feeling of uncertainty to warrant definite rules being laid down.

As early as 1721 a proposal was made to improve and systematize the Synod's

⁷⁷ Mss. minutes, Presbytery of Donegal, [Vol. I], p. 195.

⁷⁸ Quoted in Briggs, op. cit., p. 184n.

organization. George Gillespie overtured the Synod that

As we have been for many years in the exercise of Presbyterian government and Church discipline, as exercised by the Presbyterians in the best reformed Churches, as far as the nature and constitution of this country will allow, our opinion is, that if any brother have any overture to offer to be formed into an act by the Synod, for the better carrying on the matter of our government and discipline, that he may bring it in against next Synod. ⁷⁹

This overture is somewhat vague, but its main purpose is clear. Now that the Church consisted of more than one presbytery it was reasonable, if it were to remain one body, for it to have some common rules of procedure. A strong case could be made that it was this lack of explicit rules of polity that caused meetings of Synod on occasion to be involved in matters that properly could have been handled by presbyteries. In other words, in the absence of a written constitution, it was natural and necessary when in doubt to consult the "highest" court.

Gillespie is saying that from 1706 on the Church has been organized implicitly along the lines of European Presbyterianism, but that it would be wise now for the polity to become more explicit. The overture was adopted by the Synod, but, at first, there were some dissentients. Twenty-one out of the twenty-five ministers on the Synod's roll were present. Of the twenty-one, six (Jonathan Dickinson, Malachi Jones, Joseph Morgan, John Pierson, David Evans, and Joseph Webb) voted against the measure.

But by the time the Synod met in 1722 the dissenters had reconsidered their position. Jones, Morgan, Dickinson, and Evans ⁸⁰ presented a paper to the Synod, in which they said:

We freely grant, that there is full executive power of church government in Presbyteries and Synods, and that they may authoritatively, in the name of Christ, use the keys of church discipline to all proper intents and purposes, and that the keys of the church are committed to the church

⁷⁹ Records, p. 68.

⁸⁰ Pierson and Webb were absent. Cf. Records, p. 69.

officers and them only. ⁸¹

They went on to say that they believed that judicatories could pass and enforce acts, but that the acts should not go against a person's conscience.

The British churches were at the time in the throes of a controversy over the question of subscription to the Westminster Symbols, and most certainly these men feared that subscription might be imposed in the American Presbyterian Church. Undoubtedly this was not Gillespie's purpose, since the question of subscription was not introduced into the Synod until 1727, and then not by Gillespie. ⁸²

And so, because the "protesters" became reconciled to and professed their belief in the authority of the judicatories of the Church, they removed their protest against Gillespie's act, and it was ordered,

that the said act remain and be in all respects as if no such protest had been made.....[and] The Synod was so universally pleased with the abovesaid composure of their difference, that they unanimously joined together in a thanksgiving prayer, and joyful singing the one hundred and thirty-third psalm". ⁸³

The first step had been taken toward formalizing the generally accepted patterns.

After the affair with Hemphill, the 1735 meeting of the Synod passed its overture asking the General Synod of Ulster to stop ordaining candidates for America sine titulo. Along with this they set down the following regulations:

That no congregation be allowed to present a call to any minister or

⁸¹ Records, p. 74. Trinterud's comment (Leonard J., The Forming of An American Tradition, Philadelphia, 1949, p. 44), that this statement would have been acceptable to any signer of the Saybrook Platform, cannot be substantiated. Church authority, says the paper, rests only in church judicatories and not at all in the general church membership. Saybrook never came nearly as close as that to Presbyterian church authority. Cf. Supra, pp. 11-12.

⁸² We will deal (Cf. infra, pp. 156-159) with the subject of subscription in relation to the 1741 division in the church. At that time several acts which had bearing on the Synod's organization before 1741, but which were directly connected with that controversy, will be considered.

⁸³ Records, op. cit.

candidate whatsoever, unless some of the brethren, members of the Presbytery unto which said congregation doth belong, have been present with said people to concur with them and moderate in said call, having been previously appointed thereunto by the Presbytery, and that no minister take upon him to moderate in such a case without such an appointment. ⁸⁴

Here the matter of ministerial calls is specifically designated a presbyterial function. Moreover, a vacant congregation must have a minister assigned by its presbytery to moderate in such a call.

In 1736

The Synod taking notice that whatever members of the Synod bring to the fund those years wherein they attend the Synod, there is no care taken by any of them to procure and send any contribution thereunto those years in which they are absent; and in order to make up this defect, the Synod orders that every Presbytery within our bounds, oblige their respective members to be provided with their respective contributions in due season, before the meeting of the Synod yearly, in order that if any of their members should be necessarily absent from the Synod, their contributions may, notwithstanding, be sent to the Synod. ⁸⁵

Here the Synod has become conscious of the greater ability of the presbyteries to supervise the collection of monies for benevolent causes. The presbyteries are, in effect, to make the collections from their respective congregations; again, the potential of the presbytery is recognized and its authority increased.

The lines were drawn even more sharply in 1738. At this meeting the Synod went on record:

it may be considered that both probationers and vacant congregations are and ought to look upon themselves as under the direction and government of their respective Presbyteries. That they ought to be ordered, directed, and concurred with, by them, in all the steps taken in order to their being settled. ⁸⁶

2. The Commission

The original Presbytery had had no standing Commission to act for it between

⁸⁴ Ibid., p. 119.

⁸⁵ Ibid., p. 123.

⁸⁶ Ibid., p. 135.

its annual meetings. This was true of the Synod for only three years. At the 1720 meeting it was "Overtured, That a commission of the Synod be appointed to act in the name, and with the whole authority of the Synod, in all affairs that shall come before them.....and that they be accountable to the Synod." ⁸⁷

The use of a Commission of Synod continued until the formation of the General Assembly in 1788.

Usually a new Commission was elected each year, although occasionally the same men were carried over from one year to the next. They were called upon at the meeting of the full Synod to report any actions taken since the previous one. ⁸⁸

Several times the Commission was appointed, at the close of a Synod, to revise the minutes of the Synod's meeting. The determination of the operating of and disbursements from the Synod's Fund was assigned to the Commission one year, 1734; and it also carried on an occasional correspondence with the General Assembly of the Church of Scotland. ⁸⁹

On occasion the Commission was appointed by the Synod to meet with a particular congregation or minister when a specific problem existed. Sometimes it was able to report to the Synod that such difficulties had been "happily accommodated". ⁹⁰

The Commission played a significant role in the case of Samuel Hemphill and also

⁸⁷ Ibid., p. 64.

⁸⁸ The Synod held no meetings outside of its annual one in Philadelphia. From 1717 through 1736 the meeting was held in September; from 1737 through 1740 in May. The spring date became the established practice and continued to this day in the annual meeting of the General Assembly.

From 1717 through 1740 the length of the meetings of the Synod (including weekends) was as follows: three meetings lasted two days, one lasted three, four lasted four, seven lasted six, five lasted seven, one lasted eight, and three meetings lasted nine days.

⁸⁹ Cf. Records, p. 151n.

⁹⁰ Ibid., p. 113n.

in the settlement of Robert Cross as assistant in Philadelphia. In 1740 a judicial problem regarding the location of a congregation was transmitted directly to the Commission by the Presbytery of Philadelphia; the Commission heard arguments pro and con and upheld the presbytery's decision.⁹¹

3. The Synod's use of committees

More than forty committees were appointed by the Synod during the period from 1717 through 1740. Fifteen of these committees were to meet during the ensuing year, before the next meeting of the Synod, and were assigned pro re nata; several times they were appointed the "full power" of the Synod or the "authority of the Synod". These committees seem to have been regarded as having the same power as the Commission, but only for their particular task. There was occasional conflict between a committee's power and the authority of a presbytery, as we have noted in the case of the committee receiving Pemberton as a member of the Synod.

The remainder of the committees were appointed for responsibilities during the meetings of the Synod. As early as the first year, 1717, "A committee for overtures, consisting of Masters McNish, Andrews, Jones, Thomson, and Pierson, was appointed".⁹² This was continued each year, sometimes being referred to as a committee "of bills and overtures", and generally was given the supervision of the Synodical Fund. It was to this committee that overtures were presented so that they might, in turn, be referred to the whole meeting in an orderly way. Occasionally, when someone would propose a matter directly to the Synod, it would be referred to this committee that they might study it and draw up a recommendation prior to its being considered. This form of procedure was most familiar to those members of the Synod who had come from Scotland and Ulster.

⁹¹ Ibid., p. 152n.

⁹² Ibid., p. 48.

4. The Synod's Fund

We have seen that in 1719 the Synod called for systematic collections to be made from congregations for the work and life of the whole Church. But from its first meeting, in 1717, the Synod called for the establishment of such a fund.

It being overtured to the Synod by the committee appointed for overtures, That it is to be proposed to the several members of the Synod, to contribute something to the raising a fund for pious uses, and that they do use their interest with their friends, on proper occasions, to contribute something to the same purpose, and that there be chosen a treasurer to keep what shall be collected, and that what is or may be gathered, be disposed of according to the discretion of the Synod; the overture was agreed upon pursued, and Mr. Andrews is to be treasurer for this purpose till the next Synod. ⁹³

At the beginning of the 1718 Synod the Fund contained £18-4-6; later that same meeting Gillespie indicated that his congregation had pledged over £6. This was the beginning of what has been called "the Pious Fund"; it was the basis for all subsequent funds handled by the American Church for its life and mission, and each year the ministers were called upon to pay in whatever they had collected, with varying degrees of success. During the 1719 meeting over £21 was bought in from collections in the congregations. At first the Fund seems to have been used mainly for the relief of ministers' widows, but soon it was being applied to a growing number of causes.

From 1717 through 1740 money was given from the Fund nine times to congregations, once to a minister for work in his parish, six times to widows, and once to the door keeper of the Synod's meeting; from 1736 the janitor of the meetings was paid from the Fund. When Anderson went to Virginia in 1738 to represent before the government there the desire of the Synod to carry on missionary activities, his expenses were paid from the Fund, and it was used during the Hemphill affair, the expense of printing defences of Synodical action being charged to it by order of the Synod.

⁹³ Ibid.

On one occasion money was allotted for the construction of a church building. At the 1737 meeting £100 was assigned to the new congregation in Philadelphia for this purpose. It was stated, though, that if the new congregation and the First reunited (as they did on Cross' arrival) "that then there be only fifty pounds allowed them out of the fund, towards purchasing a burying ground".⁹⁴ This was done.

In 1719 the Synod of Glasgow made a large contribution,⁹⁵ and continued the practice for many years. We have seen how this collection in Scotland was a stimulus to the indigenous offerings in America. By 1735 the Fund had grown to £507-16-10 and in 1739 stood at nearly £600.

One incident shows that the Synod was not wanting in practical common sense. The collections for the Fund had lagged; in 1737 only six of the twenty-two ministers present had brought collections from their congregations. Therefore, at the 1738 meeting the presbyteries were called upon to observe the order made in 1736, directing the absent members to send collections; and the Synod proceeded to rule that all ministers

shall either seasonably propose the affair, and read the Synod's letter to their respective congregations, and appoint a day for a public collectionor oblige themselves to pay out of their own proper estates ten shillings to the fund.⁹⁶

The ministers returned to their parishes with a renewed zeal for the collection of funds, and at the next meeting of the Synod, in 1739, twenty-six out of the thirty-two ministers present had brought money from their congregations.

⁹⁴ Ibid., p. 134.

⁹⁵ For a letter of George McNish to Principal John Stirling of Glasgow, written in November of 1718, Cf. WL, Vol. XXII, No. 118. This letter, asking for financial support, was written by the order of the Synod. Cf. Records, p. 54.

⁹⁶ Records, p. 136.

5. Schools

There were no official synodical schools established during this period, yet this was not due to any neglect, for in 1739 the Synod was overtured to erect "a school, or seminary of learning". It unanimously approved of such an institution,

and in order to the accomplishing it did nominate Messrs. Pemberton, Dickinson, Cross, and Anderson, two of which, if they can be prevailed upon, to be sent home to Europe to prosecute this affair with proper directions. And in order to this, it is appointed that the commission of the Synod, with correspondents from every Presbytery, meet at Philadelphia the third Wednesday of August next. ⁹⁷

The first inclination of the Synod was to look to Britain for aid. The Commission was to meet to proceed further in the matter, with the presbyteries, as such, represented.

The Commission met three months later and began to take the matter of a school under consideration. It was felt that the preliminary steps should be collections from the congregations under the jurisdiction of the Synod and an appeal to the General Assembly of the Church of Scotland. But the more they studied the proposal the larger and more complex a task it appeared to be, so that the Commission finally decided to call a meeting of the whole Synod for the next month, September of 1739, to determine the matter. The meeting was never held. The minutes of the stated meeting of the Synod for 1740 record that

the commission of the Synod did meet last year according to appointment, in order to conclude upon a method for prosecuting the overture respecting the erecting a seminary of learning. The minutes of that proceeding were read, and although herein it is found, that they concluded upon calling the whole Synod together as necessary in that affair; yet the war breaking out between England and Spain, the calling of the Synod was omitted, and the whole affair laid aside for that time. ⁹⁸

It was nearly five years later, during the schism, that a Synodical school was

⁹⁷ Ibid., p. 149.

⁹⁸ Ibid., p. 151.

established.

6. The Synod's use of ruling elders

Elders took a growing part in the business of the Synod. As early as 1722 an elder, John Budd of Philadelphia, was assigned to a committee which brought in overtures relating to disciplinary action against a minister, Henry Hook. In 1724 Budd and one minister were to write a letter to a minister to whom the Synod had refused money from the Fund, explaining the reasons for the decision. In 1731 Budd was again appointed to a committee of correspondence.

In 1730 the Synod appointed a committee composed entirely of laymen, most if not all of whom were elders, to determine the boundaries of the two congregations at Elk River. And beginning in 1737 the Synod annually instructed the members of the Synod's Commission that "if they have occasion to meet, they endeavour to have elders with them".⁹⁹

When the Synod determined to allow a second congregation to be erected in Philadelphia it was done so by "a great majority". But one member of the Synod, a ruling elder, "Mr. John Smith, of Bethlehem, in the High-Lands of New York, desired that his dissent might be entered in our minutes".¹⁰⁰

In 1735 the Synod

found that many of the elders have gone home without leaving any reasons for their so doing; the Synod do order, that such elders as do withdraw from the Synod without leave, shall be left to the censure of their sessions, and report made thereof to the next Synod. And the Synod do recommend it to the several congregations to defray the necessary charges that their elders be at during their attendance upon the Synod.¹⁰¹

During the twenty-four years under consideration 191 different elders attended

⁹⁹ Ibid., p. 131.

¹⁰⁰ Ibid., p. 122.

¹⁰¹ Ibid., p. 117.

the annual meetings of the Synod, representing their congregations. There was an average of over eleven elders present at each meeting, while during the same period there was an average of twenty ministers present. Two elders represented their congregations nine times, one seven times, two six times, one five times, one four times, eight three times, twenty-eight twice, and 148 only once. This indicates that the policy of the annual election of elders continued wide-spread throughout the Synod during this period. ¹⁰²

C. Conclusions

Mistaken identity between Synod and presbyteries existed from the formation of the Synod in 1717. Although the Synod did not frequently exercise functions which most naturally would fall to the presbyteries, the lack of any clear-cut distinction often made the efficient operation of judicial processes difficult. The Synod was most concerned with the control of its ministers, especially the reception of new members. This will become even more obvious when we look at those events which led up to the schism in 1741.

While the Synod had not clearly drawn lines of demarcation between its authority and the authority of its presbyteries, there was an increasing awareness of the strength of presbyterial supervision over ministers and congregations as well as for specific assignments related to the missionary enterprises of the church. More definite rules were made, these generally giving greater exercise of power to the presbyteries. As the church grew in strength so also grew the ability of the presbyteries to supervise activities in their respective areas, and the need for Synodical control in these areas was reduced.

¹⁰² Cf. Appendix II, p. 378, "A Representation of the Case betwix the presbyterian church", etc., op. cit. Dr. Nicoll is accused of agreeing to become an elder, even being elected, and then refusing, "without giving one reason why". This was in 1726. Since Nicoll had represented the New York City congregation at the Synod meetings of 1719 and 1720 we must conclude that elders were chosen annually in that congregation.

The Synod's use of a strong Commission and committees presented a threat to the orderly functioning of the presbyteries. The Church began to learn that its basic impulse, to commit matters of discipline and investigation to its presbyteries, was the wisest policy. There was a growing realization that the work of the Church was solidly strengthened at the local level by the oversight and authority of its area presbyteries, and that the Synod itself would best serve the Church by giving cohesion to the whole.

Now that we have looked closely at the organization of the Synod during the period from 1719-1740 and its relationship to its presbyteries, we must examine the life and work of the presbyteries. In them we will find the front-line of the Church's mission.

CHAPTER FIVE

The Order and Work of the Presbyteries, 1717-1740

There were eight presbyteries operative during part or all of the period from 1717-1740: Philadelphia, New Castle, Donegal, New Brunswick, Long Island, East Jersey, Lewis, and New York. Of these, minutes, or part of the minutes, of the first four are extant; all of the records of the latter four during this period have been lost.

The following minutes, being the total extant for the period, will be used in this chapter to examine the role that was played by the presbyteries in the life of the church: New Castle, 1717-1731; Donegal, 1732-1740; Philadelphia, 1733-1740; New Brunswick, 1738-1740. It will be noticed that from 1717-1731 the only minutes extant are those of the Presbytery of New Castle; the minutes of that presbytery from 1732-1758 are lost.

The opening minute of the Presbytery of New Castle, at its first meeting, on May 13, 1717, was:

The Annual presbytery of philadelphia having met the 3d Tuesday of September Anno Domi 1716 did unanimously agree, to Constitute themselves into a Synod, and accordingly appointed several inferior Presbyteries; of which one was appointed to be held at New Castle or elsewhere, Consisting of ye ministers of New Castle, Christiana Creek, Welsh Tract, Appoquiminy, Petuxen and Petapsco.¹

We will examine the authority and supervision that this and the other presbyteries exercised over their ministers and congregations, look at their internal organization, and, finally, note their inter-relations.

A. The presbyteries' control of ministers

1. Admission

As we have noted (Cf. Supra, p. 83), during this period all but two ordained ministers from outside the bounds of the church were received by the Synod itself,

¹ Minutes of the Presbytery of New Castle, Vol. I. (hereafter in this chapter, New Castle), p. 1; printed in JPH, XIV, pp. 289-290.

prior to their becoming members of a presbytery. The minutes of the Presbytery of New Castle, holding a pro re nata meeting on January 28, 1724, show one of the instances of presbyterial action. It was recorded at this meeting that Thomas Creaghead, who had recently come from New England, presented credentials which the presbytery judged "sufficient"; therefore, he was received as a member.²

Ministers rather seldom moved from one presbytery to another, but when they did it was a matter for the two presbyteries involved. Samuel Gelston was received at the August 1728 meeting of the Presbytery of New Castle from the Presbytery of Long Island. In 1733 the Presbytery of Donagall received Thomas Creaghead from the Presbytery of New Castle. The Presbytery of Philadelphia received Hugh Carlisle from the Presbytery of New Castle in 1736. In none of these cases did the Synod take any action.

It was not unusual for a minister to become a member of a presbytery without having received a call to one of its congregations. He would preach in several vacant churches for a period of time, and if the proper call were offered through the presbytery he would accept it and become settled by the presbytery as pastor.

2. Trials for ordination

A number of young men were taken on trial for ordination; the Presbytery of New Castle alone had over a dozen under its care during the period. The requirements for ordination remained high, even with the great influx of Ulster Scots and the accompanying need for ministers to serve them.

The Latin thesis was held as a requirement by all the presbyteries. Robert Cross was directed by the Presbytery of New Castle to write on the subject, "De

² New Castle, p. 75; printed in JPH, XV, p. 90. Creaghead was an Ulster Scot who had come to New England in 1715. He graduated from Edinburgh in 1691. Cf. Briggs, Charles A., American Presbyterianism, etc., Edinburgh, 1885, p. 186n., who fails to notice a minute of the Synod of Ulster for 1698, which says that Creaghead had been taken under trials for the ministry by the Presbytery of Strabane. Cf. Records of the General Synod of Ulster, I, p. 33. This minute raises questions about the years between Creaghead's graduation and his acceptance as a candidate.

Libero Arbitrio". In addition he preached to the presbytery an assigned "popular" sermon on Romans 2:12, "together with such Extemporary tryals as are usual in the like Cases".³ Presenting his requirements on March 17, 1719, Cross was ordained by the Presbytery the same day. There is no reason to suspect that he was not examined in biblical languages, since the minutes of the presbyteries did not always list each part of a candidate's trials. In 1724 the same presbytery examined William McMillan in the "learned Languages".⁴

The trials of two other candidates under the care of the Presbytery of New Castle give us the fullest detail of requirements for ordination during this period. Hugh Stevenson was received from Ireland as a candidate at the May 1726 meeting and assigned a sermon (a "practicall discourse") on I Thessalonians 5:17 and a Latin thesis on "De Divinitate Christi" to be delivered at the next meeting of the presbytery, the following month. Upon fulfilling this, he was assigned a "presbytery exercise" on II Peter 3:18 and told that he would be examined in the biblical languages and have to answer extemporaneous questions at the next meeting, in August. In August he was assigned a sermon on Romans 7:24 which he preached at the following meeting in September. He was licensed after his subscribing to the Westminster Confession of Faith⁵ and promising "subjection to this Presb:". ⁶

John Tennent's trials under the supervision of the Presbytery of New Castle covered ten months and four meetings of the presbytery. Received as a candidate at the November 1728 meeting, by the time of his licensing at the September 1729 meeting he had preached three sermons, delivered a lecture, presented a Latin thesis

³ New Castle, p. 13; JPH, XIV, p. 297.

⁴ Ibid., p. 89; JPH, XV, p. 98.

⁵ The entire matter of subscription is discussed in Chapter six.

⁶ New Castle, p. 112; JPH, XV, p. 116.

and defended it orally, had been examined in the languages, and had answered extemporary questions.⁷

The other presbyteries were no less thorough in their examinations. The Presbytery of Philadelphia required Hamilton Bell to preach three sermons and present two Latin theses, as well as examining him in the languages and questioning him as to his "orthodoxy, Knowledge in Divinity and the Doctrines of the Gospel" and his personal Christian experience.⁸ All this was within the space of less than two months.

The Presbytery of New Brunswick examined John Rowland in 1738 on "his knowledge in the usual parts of learning and his experience of a work of converting Grace in his Soul, which he sustained to their Satisfaction".⁹ He further was assigned a sermon on Psalm 85:5 and a Latin thesis on "Num Scriptura sacra sit divina[e] authoritatis", both for the meeting of the Presbytery the following month.

When Henry Goetschius was examined for ordination by the Presbytery of Philadelphia in May of 1737 it was discovered that

tho' he appeared well skilled in the Learned Languages yet inasmuch as... [he was found] altogether ignorant in College Learning and but poorly read in Divinity, his ordination to the ministry must at present be deferred.¹⁰

It was recommended that Goetschius study for a reasonable period of time under some minister in the presbytery. It is interesting to note that he was examined by a committee of the presbytery, whose determination was approved by the whole court. Such procedure was unusual,¹¹ for examination normally was conducted by the full

⁷ Cf. Ibid., pp. 137-156; JPH, XV, pp. 178-190.

⁸ Mss. minutes, Presbytery of Philadelphia, [Vol. 1] (hereafter in this chapter, Philadelphia), pp. 92-93.

⁹ Minutes of the Presbytery of New Brunswick, Vol. I. (hereafter in this chapter, New Brunswick); printed in JPH, XXIV, p. 139.

¹⁰ Philadelphia, pp. 42-43.

¹¹ A portion of Hugh Stevenson's trials was conducted by a committee of the Presbytery of New Castle in September of 1728. Cf. New Castle, p. 137; JPH, XV, p. 178.

presbytery.

3. Ordination

The minutes of all the presbyteries make explicit that ordination was to be performed by the "imposition of hands".¹² The ordinations sometimes were carried out wherever the presbyteries happened to be meeting at the time; occasionally the entire presbytery was appointed to meet in the ordinand's prospective charge; and in a few instances the responsibility devolved upon a committee of presbytery, to meet at the ordinand's church.

An interesting feature of some of the ordinations was the place left for objection by anyone in the ordinand's prospective congregation. This in no way lessened a presbytery's control over the intended minister, but in fact enhanced it. Almost always the ordinand had been preaching for a period of time to the people who issued the call. The presbytery exercised the sole determination regarding his ordination, but it often was felt that any irregularities in the man's life could be detected by those who had had the best opportunity of being close to him, day by day. Usually, of course, such objections would mean that the man would not have received a call from the congregation in the first place; but the presbytery determined to be certain that it had done everything possible to protect the Holy Office from unworthy men.

At least once, representatives from the prospective congregation traveled to the meeting of the presbytery to enter their objections. At the August 1737 meeting of the Presbytery of Philadelphia appeared some of the people of West Hanover, the church over whom a licentiate, John Cleverly, was to be ordained in the near future. They objected strongly to the ordination for unspecified reasons and entered papers of protest. After full consideration, the presbytery determined that Cleverly certainly was ready and qualified for ordination, but that it would not be "safe or expedient" to ordain and install him as their minister, given the

¹² The minutes of the Presbytery of Philadelphia, p. 29, for November 2, 1736 record that David Cowell was ordained by prayer and the imposing of the "Hands of the Presbyters".

strong opposition.¹³

On the occasions when a presbytery met at the church over which the licentiate was to be ordained, the congregation often was given their 'last chance'. So when the Presbytery of Donegal met on November 10, 1736 at the Forks of Brandywine, they asked the congregation if there were any objections to Samuel Black's being ordained and installed as their minister. There were none, and the presbytery proceeded to the ordination.¹⁴

The most interesting practice in this connection was illustrated in the ordination of Adam Boyd by the Presbytery of New Castle on October 14, 1724, at the Octorara congregation. Earlier that day George Gillespie made a proclamation three times at the door of the meeting house that "if any person had any thing to object against the Ordaining of Mr. Adam Boyd they should Make it known to the presbytery now Sitting".¹⁵ This was the common practice of the Presbytery of New Castle, but whether it was used by the other presbyteries is not known.

Candidates always were ordained to a particular charge, never sine titulo. It appears that the only exception during these years was John Rowland. At the October 1739 meeting of the Presbytery of New Brunswick Rowland was ordained "to the ministry of the Word in general".¹⁶

It was a matter of course that when a presbytery ordained a man he automatically became a member of that presbytery. Thus, Alexander Creaghead was ordained by

¹³ Philadelphia, p. 47.

¹⁴ Mss. minutes, Presbytery of Donegal, [Vol. I] (hereafter in this chapter, Donegal), p. 140.

¹⁵ New Castle, p. 92; JPH, XV, p. 101.

¹⁶ New Brunswick; JPH, VI, p. 346. This ordination was to have serious ramifications with regard to the approaching schism, as will be seen when we look to the Old Side-New controversy.

the Presbytery of Donegal on November 18, 1735, and it was recorded the next morning that "Mr. Alexer Craighead is now present [as] a member of ye Pby.". ¹⁷ When Robert Cross was ordained by the Presbytery of New Castle in March of 1719 it was recorded that "accordingly the said Mr. Robert Cross was received a member of this Presbytery". ¹⁸ This makes particularly curious the minute recorded by the same presbytery in May of 1723 following the ordination of Thomas Evans: "Mr. Thos Evans at his desire was received as a member of this Presbytery". ¹⁹ This minute is entirely out of keeping with the practice of the other presbyteries and with the Presbytery of New Castle itself, at every other ordination.

4. Installation

The act of installation was implicit in ordination when the ordination took place at the church where the ordinand was to serve. In such cases the presbyteries made no mention of an 'installation' apart from ordination. But when the ordination had not taken place in the congregation which the new minister was to serve, or in the relatively rare case of an ordained minister moving from another presbytery, installation was usually carried out. The Reverend Thomas Creaghead was received by the Presbytery of New Castle on January 28, 1724. He had not as yet received a call from a congregation within the bounds of New Castle, but was presented one which had been handed in at this meeting from the people of Elk River. After a month's consideration, Creaghead refused it at the next meeting; he then was handed a call from White Clay Creek, which he accepted at the meeting of the presbytery on April 15. Alexander Hutchison was ordered to officiate in his "instalement" (sic!). ²⁰

¹⁷ Donegal, p. 97.

¹⁸ New Castle, p. 19; JPH, XIV, p. 301.

¹⁹ Ibid., p. 64; JPH, XV, p. 84.

²⁰ Ibid., p. 81; JPH, XV, p. 93.

It is evident that the Presbytery of Philadelphia at least once neglected to carry out the formal installation of a man already ordained. In 1726 William Tennent, a member of the Presbytery of Long Island, accepted a call from the congregation at Neshaminy, Pennsylvania. Whether or not the Presbytery of Philadelphia assigned a committee to carry out the installation, which failed to do so, is not known. But the congregation had been asked in their meeting house whether or not they accepted him as their pastor, which they did.²¹ In any case, the omitting of a formal installation causes the presbytery a great deal of trouble ten years later, when a group of dissatisfied members from Neshaminy protests at the September 1736 meeting that Tennent is "no more than a supply" to their congregation. The presbytery says that even with the lack of formal installation there is no problem, since Tennent had been called by the congregation, accepted the call, and has served them for ten years. Moreover, argues the presbytery, the people have paid subscriptions to him, and up to this point there has been no disruption in the congregation. The presbytery votes that Tennent is to be considered "ye proper legal Minister of ye People, notwithstanding the want of formal Enstallment".²²

5. Dismissal

The presbyteries exercised full control over their ministers in the matter of dismissal from pastoral charges. The Presbytery of Donegal on September 8, 1740 received

A Lett[e]r from Mr. Bertram wherein he desires a dismission from his Congregn....[it was] Order[e]d that Mr. John Thomson & Sankey write to him, acquainting him that ye Pby. not having light at present to determine that affair, desire him to continue till our next.²³

²¹ Webster, Richard, A History of the Presbyterian Church in America, etc., Philadelphia, 1857, p. 365.

²² Philadelphia, p. 23.

²³ Donegal, p. 195.

In September of 1723 a representative of the Jamaica congregation in the Presbytery of Long Island attended the meeting of the Presbytery of New Castle in order to present a call for Robert Cross, which, being approved, Cross took under consideration. At the meeting of New Castle the following month it was reported by a representative of Cross' congregation that Cross "is removed from thence to Jamaica, tho' he had not acquainted this Presbytery of his acceptance of the forementioned call".²⁴ New Castle would have approved the move, but Cross had not waited to inform them of his acceptance. This rare case of irregularity was sharply rebuked by the presbytery.

When there was a request for the dissolution of a pastoral relationship, a presbytery usually moved with great caution. Alexander Hutcheson requested the Presbytery of New Castle to dissolve his pastoral relationship with his two charges, Bohemia Manor and Broad Creek, both in Maryland, because they could not support him. But the presbytery refused, helped him financially, and gave him permission to spend one-third of his time in another congregation.²⁵

When the Presbytery of Philadelphia received in May of 1739 such a request from Ebenezer Gould it took no hasty action. Gould told the presbytery that his people were not supporting him well and that he did not feel that he could be useful there any longer. The presbytery said that "the dissolving [of] ye pastoral Relation between a Minister and his People is a matter of great Consequence", and since no member of Gould's congregation was present at this meeting further action was postponed until the following month's session.²⁶ When the matter was brought up in June it appeared that the situation at the church was not as serious as it had

²⁴ New Castle, p. 75; JPH, XV, p. 90.

²⁵ Ibid., p. 118; JPH, XV, p. 160.

²⁶ Philadelphia, pp. 70-71.

been made out to be, and that Gould and his congregation were willing to continue the relationship. Gould asked only that the church be punctual in paying his annual salary of £45, "without giving him the trouble of collecting it".²⁷ Here is a fine illustration of how a presbytery used discretion in preventing a premature and unfortunate divorce between a pastor and his congregation; the result of this situation under a Congregationalist polity is obvious.

6. Discipline

Little difference can be seen among the presbyteries in the discipline they exercised over their ministers. Perhaps the Presbytery of New Castle showed the greatest 'zeal'. Robert Cross had been convicted by the Synod in 1720 of fornication, to which he confessed and professed a great repentance. On his receiving a relatively light sentence from the Synod, George Gillespie protested that it should have been more severe. The minutes of the Presbytery of New Castle for May 2, 1722 record that he presented to the presbytery a "Narrative of the proceedings of the synod relateing the affair of Mr. Cross"; Gillespie told the presbytery that he planned to publish this narrative, criticising the Synod's leniency with Cross. "The presy takeing this into their serious consideration do appoint that Mr. Gillespie shall not publish said narrative untill the sitting of our next Synod".²⁸ Here is a case of a presbytery placing 'censorship' upon one of its members; Gillespie abided by the decision.

New Castle's zeal certainly was misplaced in the case of Robert Laing, a minister whom the Synod had received from England in 1722. The following year, at the August meeting of presbytery, it was recorded that

The Presbytery being informed yt Mr. Laing hath been guilty of prophaning

²⁷ Ibid., p. 73b.

²⁸ New Castle, p. 44; JPH, XV, p. 74.

the Lord's Day by washing himself in a Creek and he confessing the same; The Presbytery after having maturely considered the Nature of the offence do agree that ye sd Mr. Laing be now rebuked by the Modr. coram, and that he be suspended from preaching until our next Presbytery.....²⁹

Actually this was only for the period of a month, since the presbytery was to meet again during the meeting of the Synod, in September. The Synod discovered that Laing, who was chronically ill, had washed himself with an "expectation of service from that action [and] do judge those censures of suspension and deposition were too severe, and do therefore repeal them".³⁰ It is interesting to note that one of the two members of the Presbytery of New Castle who had not agreed with the sentence of deposition was Robert Cross.

In 1730 some question arose about the qualifications and credentials of John Wilson, a minister who recently had come to America from Ulster. Apparently he had been received by the Presbytery of Philadelphia and was itinerating in some of the congregations of the Presbytery of New Castle. New Castle ordered at its June meeting that Wilson was not to be employed to preach in any of its congregations.³¹

Among other cases of ministerial discipline before the Presbytery of New Castle during the period was "the disorderly & irregular treatment" Gilbert Tennent gave to the congregation at New Castle in 1726³² and a display four years later by his brother John of his notoriously bad temper in using "certain expressions in public and private".³³

The Presbytery of Donegal wrestled with some interesting cases of problem-

²⁹ Ibid., p. 69; JPH, XV, p. 87.

³⁰ Records, p. 76.

³¹ New Castle, p. 163; JPH, XV, p. 195.

³² Cf. Ibid., pp. 110-113; JPH, XV, pp. 114-116.

³³ Cf. Ibid., p. 166; JPH, XV, p. 198.

ministers. During the early 1730's William Orr was of constant concern to the presbytery. Settling at Nottingham he became engrossed in a series of battles with his session and congregation, and was accused of a number of offences, from preaching false doctrine to sexual immorality. He left Nottingham in 1735 without the permission of the presbytery, and the following April the judicatory censured him for disgraceful conduct.³⁴ During the morality case against him, which appeared before the presbytery in September of 1735, his chief accuser was a Mrs. Robison, but he was never convicted of the charge because one David Kenedy came before the presbytery to say

that Mrs Robison was his shipmate from Ireland & yt he heard some persons on board of sd ship discourse it as a report yt Mrs. Robison was a witch.....[And that] Mrs Robison was ye cause of their tedious voyage.³⁵

David Alexander explains to the Presbytery of Donegal in 1740 why he has not been attending its meetings. It is because of "weakness & bodily indisposition". But there is another reason, he adds: while he considers "ye government of ye Ch[urch] by Pby....agreeable to ye word of God", he has felt that the presbytery has been opposing "ye work of God in their Seaming to condemn ye crying out of people" at services of worship. The Presbytery replies that whatever Alexander's scruples against the presbytery, its concern is that he withdrew from the court "without having ever remonstrated them to ye Pby". Alexander has no leg on which to stand in this matter and shows himself quite irresponsible in his understanding of Presbyterian polity. All the presbytery asks him to do is to "acknowledge his Sinful Disorder", not to turn from the methods of the revival which had just begun;

³⁴ Donegal, p. 115. Orr fled to London, where he received priest's orders from the Bishop of London in September of 1736. He returned to South Carolina, where he ministered until his death in 1755. Cf. Webster, op. cit., p. 411.

³⁵ Donegal, p. 74.

but this he refused to do.³⁶ The following year he became a member of the New Side revivalist party.

Thomas Creaghead became involved in a matter that perhaps is unique in American Protestantism. Creaghead, who was pastor of the Pequea congregation, was investigated by the Presbytery of Donegal in May of 1736 regarding his treatment of his wife. It seemed that the basic problem was his "debarring her last summer from the L[ord]'s Table, without consulting with his session in that affair".³⁷ He said that the reasons were known only to him, and that therefore his session was not competent to assist in the matter, but in September the presbytery instructed Creaghead that he was to "comply to admit her to ye Lord's Table for ye future".³⁸ At this same meeting a delegation from the church "declared in the name of the Congre that unless Mr Craighead will acknowledge his misconduct to his wife, they are unwilling to continue under his ministry".³⁹ This he refused, and the presbytery unanimously dissolved the pastoral relationship.

For several months Creaghead itinerated throughout the presbytery before receiving a call to the Hopewell congregation, but there was opposition in the presbytery to letting him settle in church before he had settled the matter with his wife. Finally, on October 5, 1737, both Creaghead and his wife appeared before the presbytery (which happened to be meeting at his old church, Pequea). He told the court that he would admit her to "sealing ordinances" in the future, and Mrs. Creaghead said that now her husband lived in "desirable peace & unity" with her. This was acceptable to the presbytery, which said that it will be "Satisfying (we hope)

³⁶ Ibid., p. 207.

³⁷ Ibid., p. 123.

³⁸ Ibid., p. 132.

³⁹ Ibid.

to God's People".⁴⁰

During the months he supplied other congregations, Creaghead ran into additional trouble with the presbytery. At the October meeting in 1736 he reported that he had not fulfilled his presbyterial appointment to preach to the people of Paxton since he had received a letter from two of the ruling elders of that church, telling him that if he came the people would not attend his preaching. Apparently his nuptial difficulties had become known. But Creaghead's reason did not satisfy the presbytery, which said:

we judge...with respect to Mr Craighead that he was in yt matter...faulty, that notwithstanding...the discouragement he had yet he being presbyterially appointed should have staid till ye...sabb[ath] and attempted to have preached untill they had actually shut ye doors agt him.⁴¹

Thomas Creaghead's son, Alexander,⁴² produced some of the most serious trouble ever faced by a presbytery in the entire colonial period. He was ordained by the Presbytery of Donegal in 1735 as pastor of the Middle Octorara congregation. Soon he began requiring parents at the baptism of their children to adopt the Scottish Solemn League and Covenant. He also believed that ministers should not be tied to one particular congregation, but should be free to travel where they wished, as evangelists, and even carried out this practice on occasion, invading the congregations of other pastors in the judicatory. Complaints were made to the presbytery, which met on December 9, 1740 in Middle Octorara for that purpose. Here Creaghead accused several members of the presbytery with numerous crimes, including "whoredom, drunkenness, swearing, Sabbath-breaking, [and] lying".⁴³ Moreover, he refused the

⁴⁰ Ibid., p. 151.

⁴¹ Ibid., pp. 137-138.

⁴² There has been doubt as to whether or not Alexander Creaghead was Thomas Creaghead's son. (Cf. Webster, op. cit., p. 383.) But the fact that Alexander named his own son Thomas (Cf. Thompson, Ernest T., Presbyterians in the South, Vol. I: 1607-1861, Richmond, 1963, p. 355), plus an entry in the minute book of the Presbytery of Donegal, p. 141, in reference to Alexander: "Creaghead, Junr", removes any such doubt.

⁴³ Donegal, p. 206.

authority of the presbytery to bring him to trial on the charges which had been raised against him; nevertheless, his trial began, and the following minute was recorded:

The pby about to hear another was interrupted by the peoples...railing at ye members [of the presbytery] in ye most...[wild] terms, So that having concluded with prayer, we were obliged to adjourn to another place, that we might get our business carried on in a peaceable & christian manner. ⁴⁴

Creaghead was suspended, but given the explicit opportunity of being reinstated if he repented. He, of course, alligned himself with the New Side revivalists; yet he was soon to break with them also.

We have seen the problems caused during a minister's trial in the Presbytery of Donegal due to a woman being called a witch. The Presbytery of Philadelphia also faced the problem of gossip when it considered charges of drunkenness against the aged Joseph Morgan. Regarding reports of his intemperance one witness reported that "he had heard that Mr. Highie or Mrs. Highie had said the Same to John Ely's wife & John Ely's wife told it to Somer Bakers wife & Somer Bakers wife to Timothy Bakers wife & She to John Smith's wife". ⁴⁵ For stronger evidence than this Morgan was suspended from the ministry in 1736, and the suspension continued until Morgan, at the September 1738 meeting, finally declared that he was "withdrawing from any Fellowship with us". ⁴⁶ But at the meeting the following month he recanted and told the presbytery that he wished "to seek orderly for his restoration", ⁴⁷ admitting most of the charges and saying that he believed the presbytery to have been correct for censuring him. He now promised that he would never repeat

⁴⁴ Ibid., pp. 207-208.

⁴⁵ Philadelphia, p. 34.

⁴⁶ Ibid., p. 59.

⁴⁷ Ibid., p. 61.

his intemperance, and the presbytery restored him to full exercise of the ministry.

When the Presbytery of Philadelphia received charges against David Evans for attempting to ostracize his elders and deacons, it made an important statement about the authority of a pastor in relation to his local church officers: "A Minister has not authority to lay aside such officers whether Elders or Deacons yt are mutually and conjunctly chosen and constituted among them [a congregation]."⁴⁸ The presbytery said that this is "our judgment", indicating that there was no fixed or generally accepted rule on the point.

In its brief existence during this period, the Presbytery of New Brunswick also had its problems of ministerial discipline. John Cross, who had been accused of neglecting the meetings of the Presbytery of East Jersey and also for moving from one congregation to another without presbyterial consent, became one of the original members of New Brunswick in 1738. He was one of the most powerful leaders, in the opening days of the revival, of what was to become the New Side group, but within the next year charges were laid against him of "unclean speech and carriage" with the daughter of one of his members. He was summoned to appear before the presbytery on April 30, 1740, when the case was to be tried, but he did not attend and sent no reason for his absence. The presbytery said: "Wee judge such a procedure to look like a Contempt of Presbyterial Authority, likewise to have a Tendency to oppress those he has a controversy with, and to defeat the very Design of Government".⁴⁹ Cross soon was deposed from the ministry; when, in 1746, he asked for restoration the presbytery refused, since they had no evidence of his real repentance.

⁴⁸ Ibid., p. 86.

⁴⁹ New Brunswick; JPH, VII, p. 144.

B. The presbyteries' control of congregations

1. Visitation

We have seen (Cf. Supra, pp. 54-5) that the original Presbytery instituted in 1710, and put into practice for the following year, a systematic check on the faithfulness of its ministers and the 'spiritual climate' of their churches. After the formation of the Synod the practice seems to have fallen into disuse. It is true that there are occasional references to a presbytery's holding a meeting in a particular town in order to "inquire into the affairs"⁵⁰ of the congregation; but it was not systematic. Only with the formation of the Presbytery of Donegal was the idea revived and implemented.

In 1733, a year after its organization, Donegal instituted a regular circular visitation of its churches, by rotating its meetings throughout its bounds. It unanimously voted for presbytery-wide visitations that would look "into the state of the congrs. and the conduct of the Minister to his people and of people towards their minister".⁵¹

Subsequent minutes detail how the visitations were carried out. On August 28, 1734

A visitation having been appointed here [Paxton], Mr. Bertram after giving intimation to the congregation preached upon 2 Corinthians 4:5 with approbation. It being interrogate whether Mr. Bertram had performed his duty as a Gospel minister and the several branches thereof, and had a conduct and behaviour suitable to his station? it was answered...of both [questions] in the affirmative to their [the congregation's] great satisfaction and spiritual Edification. [Then] Mr. Bertram was called in and asked whether the people had performed their duty to him? in all the branches of it? He answered that he had no general complaints, but was not fully satisfied in reference to his house.⁵²

⁵⁰ New Castle, p. 47; JPH, XV, p. 76.

⁵¹ Donegal, p. 12. Cf. Craighead, J.G., Scotch and Irish Seeds in American Soil, etc., Philadelphia, 1878, p. 283. Craighead mistakenly states that the visitations were by committees.

⁵² Donegal, p. 37.

The following spring the presbytery met at the Donegal church:

The designe of this present meeting of ye Pby in this place being to hold a visitation....ye Pby. proceeded to interrogate the congregation several questions relating to Mr Andersons conduct among them as a minister of ye gospel....to w^h they by their representatives gave answer to ye satisfaction of the Pby. ⁵³

Who these "representatives" were is not indicated; certainly they were not the ruling elders, for the minutes go on to say that following the questioning of the congregation the elders were called in and asked about the minister's behavior. Then the elders and congregation were removed, and the pastor, James Anderson, was called in and asked "several pertinent questions concerning the conduct of his Elders & people towards him"; he also gave answers which satisfied the presbytery. "Then all parties being called in the Moderator exhorted them all and encouraged [them] cheerfully to prsver [i.e. persevere] in their [respective?] duties". ⁵⁴ Apparently, then, the moderator of the presbytery played the key role in the congregational visitations. Within two and a half years from the time it had initiated the system, the Presbytery of Donegal had made at least one visitation to the congregation of each minister under its jurisdiction.

2. Supplies

The presbyteries were flooded with requests for supplies from their vacancies. In its first three years the Presbytery of New Brunswick received eighty such applications. In each presbytery supply was never able to equal demand, but given the difficulties of travel and the hazards of weather, the presbyteries' appointments were amazingly well fulfilled. Out of over fifty assignments made by the Presbytery of New Castle to eight vacancies in the single year, 1725, only seven were not completed. The presbyteries also were conscientious in checking at their

⁵³ Ibid., pp. 50-51.

⁵⁴ Ibid., p. 51.

meetings as to whether or not the previous assignments had been carried out.

The congregation at Kent, Delaware is a good example of a vacant church depending on a presbytery for preaching. In 1714 Anderson had been sent from the original Presbytery as a monthly supply, and Samuel Gelston, a candidate, went in 1715; the following year the congregation received supplies in connection with another church, Cedar Creek. After the formation of the Presbytery of New Castle, Robert Cross preached monthly at Kent for several years, and, in addition, the people received preaching from Hook, Thomas Evans, Steward, Hutcheson, and Peter Finch. ⁵⁵

There was no discrimination shown in assignments; long-established pastors received their full share along with the most recently-installed. The most significant thing to note is that the vacant congregations respected the sole right of their particular presbytery to provide supplies, even though the presbyteries were so short of ministers, licentiaties, and candidates.

While the presbyteries were determined to do all they could to fulfill the crying need for supplies, they were determined to be certain that a man was qualified before giving him permission to preach in vacant churches. At its April 1739 meeting the Presbytery of Donegal was informed that a Mr Dunlop, a probationer from New England, had made his way first to the Presbytery of New Castle and then to James Anderson, minister at Donegal, who gave Dunlop some "recommendations". With these recommendations Dunlop had gone to the presbytery's newly-formed congregation in Virginia. The presbytery stated that Dunlop had no certificate either from New England or from the Presbytery of New Castle and judged that Anderson had committed "a dangerous mistake". They went on to record:

It is our Judgement that that people [in Virginia] shall not Entertain him as a preacher, nor that he be allowed to preach any where within our bounds until he bring regular credentials and be received orderly among us, and [that] that people be speedily written to to signifie our Judgement in this matter. ⁵⁶

⁵⁵ Cf. Webster, op. cit., p. 397.

⁵⁶ Donegal, p. 177.

During the late 1730's the Presbytery of Donegal sent a number of supplies into Virginia in answer to numerous requests from new Ulster Scot settlements. This presbyterial action resumed the occasional work of the Presbytery of New Castle in the early 1720's and set the stage for the strong Presbyterian growth in Virginia during the 1740's and 1750's.

3. Calls

Without exception, when a congregation wished to have a particular minister settled as its pastor, a call for him was presented to his presbytery. In the rare case of a call coming from a church outside the minister's presbytery, representatives would travel to that presbytery to make the presentation. We have already noted this in the call of Jamaica, Long Island to Robert Cross.

We have noticed that a minister occasionally became a member of a presbytery without having received a call to a particular congregation, and itinerated with the permission of the presbytery until an acceptable call was presented. This was true also of licentiates, who sometimes would preach one or two years before accepting the call of a local church. Quite often, of course, a minister or licentiate would supply one particular congregation where there appeared to be a mutual desire of his being installed. This 'engagement' before 'marriage' of a minister and people was both necessary and healthful, since, particularly in the more established congregations, pastorates of thirty years were not unusual. A congregation usually expected a minister to settle for many years, if not for a lifetime; therefore, both parties tried to make as certain as possible about the relationship in advance.

From 1717 through 1730 the Presbytery of New Castle received over twenty calls from its congregations. On one occasion a church moved so hastily that it had calls issued to two different men at the same time! The congregation at New Castle had presented to the presbytery in November of 1729 a call for John Tennent, but at the meeting of presbytery nearly three months later the congregation indicated that it now wanted John Thomson, yet wondered about the call it had presented for Tennent.

A member of the presbytery was appointed to contact Tennent immediately to see whether or not he accepted the call. Of course, it was rejected. ⁵⁷

The congregation, obviously at fault in this matter, would have been helped greatly if the presbytery had found it possible to send a minister to moderate in the drawing-up of the call, as was its occasional practice. This was the consistent procedure followed by the Presbytery of Philadelphia.

It is evident that the presbyteries had no regulation requiring a church to consider one prospective minister at a time. In March of 1738 the Presbytery of Philadelphia met at Maidenhead to "clear the way" for the settlement of a minister. Some members of the congregation were well satisfied with the prospect of having John Guild as their minister, but there was "a considerable number yt insisted upon the Trial of another Candidate besides Mr. Guild before they come to a Determination about any particular man". ⁵⁸

On a few occasions, although it never was required, the final determination in a call was left entirely in the hands of a presbytery. This was done in the Presbytery of New Castle in 1718 by a candidate for ordination:

Mr. [Robert] Cross submitted to ye advise of ye Presbytery with respect to his acceptation of ye Call of ye people of New Castle, Whereupon the presbytery gave their advis[e] to ye sd Mr Cross to accept of ye sd Call, and resolved to proceed, Habito Tempore, in ye orderly steps of Tryal in order to his ordination. ⁵⁹

The same year the presbytery received a call from the Tre Dyffryn congregation for David Evans, who was having some difficulties with his people at Welsh Tract. William Williams, the representative of the Welsh Tract congregation, said that they were unprepared to let Evans go, but "were willing to submit whol[ly] to the Determination of ye Presbytery in this affaire". ⁶⁰

⁵⁷ New Castle, pp. 158, 161; JPH, IV, pp. 192, 194.

⁵⁸ Philadelphia, p. 51.

⁵⁹ New Castle, pp. 11-12; JPH, XIV, p. 296.

⁶⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 13; JPH, XIV, p. 297. Here was the congregation which had submitted with so much patience to the original Presbytery in the matter of Evans' educational requirements (Cf. *Supra*, pp. 58-60). The presbytery here wanted to keep him at Welsh Tract and managed to do so for two years longer, but in 1720 the pastoral relationship was dissolved. Evans itinerated throughout the presbytery for several years before accepting the pastorate at Tre Dyffryn.

Sometimes a presbytery would reject a congregation's call because it promised an insufficient salary for the prospective minister. There is no indication that there was a 'minimum salary' required, but each presbytery knew what would be necessary for a man to live in its parishes. At the April 13, 1736 meeting of the Presbytery of Donegal a delegation from the Forks of Brandywine presents "a supplication, a list of subscriptions, & a call to Mr Samuel Black". The presbytery notes that the call is not as fully subscribed "as is requisite in such a Case", and it is decided that Black should serve the people as a supply until the next meeting of the presbytery. In the meantime, Adam Boyd is directed to convene the congregation and to moderate in their more fully subscribing the call. He is to tell them that the presbytery does not at all approve of the call stipulating just £50 when the subscription list shows that £66 already has been committed. ⁶¹

At its June 1721 meeting the Presbytery of New Castle received a call from the Elk River congregation, for Daniel McGill, but found the subscription for a salary deficient. The presbytery ordered this church to make corrections and to return the call at the next meeting of the presbytery, for approval. Just as with the case of the call to Black in the Presbytery of Donegal, this presbytery said that McGill was to continue to preach to the congregation until the matter was settled. Two months later, at the August meeting, the Elk River call and subscription were found in order by the presbytery; only then were they presented to McGill. ⁶²

4. New churches and church boundaries

One of the most vital functions performed by a presbytery was the establishing of new congregations within its bounds and the regulation of the boundaries of its existing churches. It is interesting that during the colonial period Presbyterian congregations were formed not nearly so much through the efforts of a minister evangelizing among 'unchurched' people, as by the petition to a presbytery from a

⁶¹ Donegal, p. lll.

⁶² New Castle, pp. 31, 39; JPH, XV, pp. 377, 382. Over a year later McGill still had not given an answer concerning the call, which, therefore, Elk River officially withdrew at a meeting of the presbytery.

group of frontier Presbyterians, who wished to be formed into a church. This particularly was true of these years under review, when the great migration to America was of the Ulster Scots, most of whom felt at least a nominal connection with Presbyterianism.

The best illustration of a petition from such a group was the supplication of the Elk River settlement to the Presbytery of New Castle on May 18, 1720:

A certaine number of people lately come from Ireland having settled about the branches of Elk River Have by Thomas Reed & Thomas Caldwell their Commissioners supplicated this presbytery, that at what time this presbytery think Convenient they would appoint one of their number to come & preach among them, and then to take such notice of their circumstances and necessities as by his Report made to this presbytery at their next session the presbytery may the more clearly know how to Countenance their Design of having the Gospel settled among them. The Said Commissioners having subjected themselves to the Care of this presbytery; The presbytery took their affaire into Consideration, And in Compliance with their above-said Supplication The presbytery Do appoint Mr Samuel Young to preach one day among said people between this and the first day of July next, and to take Cognizance of their Circumstances and to make report thereof to our next session. ⁶³

The following month the representatives of Elk River again appeared at the presbytery, now with a letter of thanks to the court and a petition asking that they might "be formed into a Congregation and to have supplies of preaching from this Presbytery". ⁶⁴ This was done.

Two years later the same presbytery received an "address" from the peoples of Brandywine and Whiteclay asking to be erected into a congregation. The presbytery agreed to do this as soon as a minister could be settled there, ⁶⁵ thus indicating that there was no fixed policy in officially organizing congregations. In the first instance, Elk River was organized as a church without the prospect of having a settled minister, but having to make do with supplies. In the second, Brandywine

⁶³ Ibid., pp. 23-24; JPH, XIV, p. 304.

⁶⁴ Ibid., p. 26; JPH, XIV, p. 306.

⁶⁵ Ibid., p. 43; JPH, XV, p. 73.

and Whiteclay were told that they would be erected into a congregation only when a minister could be settled. In actual practice, the relations to the presbytery of all these people probably were uniform, but a lack in the consistency of procedure is revealed. Thus, in September of 1729, when the new settlers at Switara were "taken under the care of Presbytery" and supplies were ordered for them it was not clear whether or not they were at that time considered an 'organized' congregation. ⁶⁶

There was a number of cases where members of existing churches desired to be allowed to form a separate group. The reasons were numerous. When the Brandywine congregation, a member of the Presbytery of Donegal since the erection of that presbytery, asked in 1734 for permission to build a new meeting house, the reason appeared to be purely one of convenience. They were one of the groups which Adam Boyd served as minister, but apparently they had to travel a distance to worship; the people wanted Boyd to continue as their minister, but they also wanted their own meeting house. ⁶⁷

When a similar request was made to the Presbytery of New Castle in May of 1726 by a few families on the Great Elk River, the reasons seemed to have more to do with personalities; friction among some of the members had sparked into a fiery dispute. The presbytery refused to divide the congregation, saying: "neither Doe We see it for the Glory of God or the Int[e]rest of Christ or the Good of souls", and a committee of three ministers was appointed to meet at Great Elk to settle the differences "if required by Mr. Houston & [his] sess[i]on". ⁶⁸ This presbytery also refused permission in 1729 to a number of people in Lower Octorara to separate from their church in order to form a new congregation. ⁶⁹

⁶⁶ Ibid., p. 156; JPH, XV, p. 190.

⁶⁷ Donegal, p. 24.

⁶⁸ New Castle, p. 106; JPH, XV, p. 111.

⁶⁹ Ibid., p. 156; JPH, XV, p. 190.

The presbyteries showed their ability to control the distances between congregations so that 'overlapping' would be avoided. When the Presbytery of Philadelphia received a request in 1738 from some of the people at Maidenhead and Hopewell to be formed into a separate church, it was granted on the condition that the location of the new meeting house be acceptable to the old congregation. The final determination was to be left with the presbytery, which said that "the Psr. [i.e. presbytery] judge it their duty & business, That when...new erections are made they take particular care that Old Standing Congregations be not hurt".⁷⁰ This presbytery also passed a general regulation that a new church could not be built less than nine miles from an existing congregation.

Nine miles did not seem quite far enough for the Presbytery of New Castle.

In 1727

The Pby understanding the people of mid[d]le Actarare intend to build a meeting house about nine miles distant from Mr Boyds meeting [house] & forseeing the bad consequences thereof & [how] circumstances now appear do order that that People Erect their said meeting house at least two miles further distant from Mr. Boyds meeting house if they expect to be supplied with preaching by this Pby.⁷¹

The Presbytery of Donegal made a practice of actively investigating a local situation before permission was given for a new erection. In 1735 it appointed one of its ministers to make a personal inspection of the situation and to report back to the next meeting before a final determination was made,⁷² and, in 1739 Alexander Creaghead and one of his elders were assigned "to perambulate the lower parts of Connewingo".⁷³

The Presbytery of New Brunswick was called to meet at Cranberry, New Jersey

⁷⁰ Philadelphia, p. 64.

⁷¹ New Castle, p. 123; JPH, XV, p. 163.

⁷² Donegal, p. 100.

⁷³ Ibid., p. 176.

to deal with a unique problem relating to that church. The Presbyterians and the members of the Church of England had built one church building, and both were worshipping in it. But some of the Presbyterians, objecting to this 'ecumenical' use of a building and desiring to be separate, the Presbytery finally decided

that the Gentlemen of the Church of England do either buy [the building] or Sell their Interest [in it] that so the Pres.terians may all have a Hous[e] by themselves alone, and so [that] their whole Body may be united. ⁷⁴

5. Collections

Most of the work of the church outside the local congregations which called for financial support was provided for out of the Synod's central Fund. There is no record during this period of the Presbyteries of Philadelphia or New Brunswick making special collections among their congregations, but there were several instances of presbytery-wide collections in the Presbyteries of New Castle and Donegal.

At the March 1727 meeting of New Castle the congregation at Lewes asked that a collection be taken from all the congregations in the presbytery so that they could rebuild their meeting house (which probably had been destroyed by fire). The presbytery ordered that each minister present the proposal to his session and make report back to the court. ⁷⁵ At its July meeting the presbytery directed that the collections for Lewes to be presented to John Thomson or to his elder at the upcoming session of the Synod. ⁷⁶

Archibald McCook died only a few months after he had been ordained and installed at Kent. In September of 1729 the Presbytery of New Castle wrote to that congregation, instructing them to take collections to provide for McCook's widow. ⁷⁷

⁷⁴ New Brunswick; JPH, VI, p. 233.

⁷⁵ New Castle, p. 113; JPH, XV, p. 116.

⁷⁶ Ibid., p. 118; JPH, XV, p. 160.

⁷⁷ Ibid., p. 156; JPH, XV, p. 190.

The following June the presbytery ordered a collection in all its churches for "two or three distressed persons in Nottingham", and for the relief of Margaret McAdam, "a distressed girl at upper Elk", in April of 1731. ⁷⁸

The Presbytery of Donegal also made collections for the widow of one of its ministers. John Paul, pastor at Nottingham, died in 1739. The following year "Mrs. Paul's low circumstances being represented to the Presby. by Some of our members, 'tis agreed that a collection be made in all ye congre[s] within our bounds to relieve her present Straits Sometime before our next [meeting]". ⁷⁹ And when John Thomson, minister at Chestnut Level, made appeal in May of 1733, this presbytery recommended "his low...circumstances to each session & congre within our bounds". The presbytery called for a written declaration of this act to be read in each congregation and any offering for Thomson to be collected and presented to the presbytery at its August meeting. ⁸⁰

6. Discipline

James Leyburn writes in The Scotch-Irish: A Social History:

Whatever objections may be brought against the minute surveillance of private life and morals by the church, it had social advantages: it maintained high moral standards in the community, by asserting the right of the community [i.e. the church] to judge these. The Presbyterian conscience had already imbued the people with a clear-cut distinction between right and wrong; but moral distinctions always need the support of social institutions, of public pressure on the wrongdoer. When pioneers moved beyond the influence of both church and courts, morality suffered because there was no true community to require an individual to live up to high standards. Violence, sexuality, crudity, and lynch-law were, to judge from contemporary evidence, marks of pioneers without a church. The church brought discipline; and however uncongenial this is to the person upon whom it is exerted, to the Presbyterian the right of the church to exact that discipline was as much a matter of course as that of courts and police is to modern Americans.

⁷⁸ Ibid., pp. 166, 175; JPH, XV, pp. 198, 205.

⁷⁹ Donegal, p. 193.

⁸⁰ Ibid., p. 7.

.....The church was never laissez-faire.⁸¹

This evaluation is in every way true. From the beginning the need was seen and met, and the local session was to be the prime court in exercising the Church's discipline to members of the local congregation. At its second meeting, on September 12, 1717, the Presbytery of New Castle "Appointed that the Respective ministers, members of this presbytery, do Endeavoure to keep a Session and a Session book in their Respective Congregations".⁸² But the participation of the presbyteries in the matter of congregational discipline certainly did not stop at the point of forming local sessions.

Appeals from the decisions of church sessions constantly came before the presbyteries. As well as cases of moral discipline, there were occasional disruptions in the congregations which sessions could not heal and which were presented for the determination of the presbyteries.

A number of cases concerning personal morals were brought to the Presbyteries after they had been considered by local sessions. The accusations range from "abusive language"⁸³ to "bigamy".⁸⁴ On March 25, 1740 the Presbytery of Philadelphia heard a case which has brought against Joseph McClean for accusing Mary Thomson of being a "whore". After the presbytery had taken the matter into its "pious consideration", it accused McClean not only of scandalizing Mrs Thomson, but also for being

very wickedly busy in industrious endeavours to take away the good name

⁸¹ Leyburn, James, The Scotch-Irish: A Social History, Chapel Hill, North Carolina, 1962, p. 294.

⁸² New Castle, p. 5; JPH, XIV, p. 293.

⁸³ Donegal, p. 40.

⁸⁴ Ibid., p. 130.

of ye sd Mary, without any Ground for it.....[Therefore] the Presbry judge the sd Joseph much to blame, and exhort and warn him to avoid all such Courses for the Time to come, and study, as a Christian ought to do, to live in Love and Peace among his Neighbours.....⁸⁵

In an interesting case brought before the Presbytery of New Castle in 1728 William Porter asks whether or not a marriage can be made void by either Civil Magistrate or Ecclesiastical Judicature if the two partners, single and free, have taken the solemn promise of marriage, using the same words as are in the ceremony, but without benefit of an actual ceremony. Obviously not having inquired out of idle curiosity, Porter admits to the Presbytery that such is the situation between himself and one Margaret Caldwell.

The presbytery gives quite a unique, if inconsistent, answer to Porter. It tells him that he and Margaret Caldwell (Porter?) have profaned the name of God, but that since they both, being single, could be married in a regular way, their cryptic "vows" bind them insofar as they "may not lawfully relinquish one another and be Joined in Marriage with other persons, though they have not thereby any right to a Conjugal cohabitation with one another".⁸⁶ The presbytery closes the matter by telling them to proceed in an orderly way to marriage, immediately.

In June of 1734 the Presbytery of Donegal upheld a session's suspension of a member because he had been convicted in a paternity case.⁸⁷ The problem of illegitimate infants was important in relation to the question of their baptism. The Presbytery of Donegal, meeting on November 1, 1733, granted permission for a child to be baptised, even though it was "early" and the parents' marriage was "disorderly". It was allowed because of the repentance indicated by the father.⁸⁸

⁸⁵ Philadelphia, pp. 81-82.

⁸⁶ New Castle, pp. 129-130; JPH, XV, pp. 167-168.

⁸⁷ Donegal, p. 34.

⁸⁸ Ibid., p. 10.

In 1730 Joseph Houston was faced with a similar problem and asked the Presbytery of New Castle what he should do about the baptizing of the illegitimate child of a woman in his church. The presbytery said that if she was "willing to testify her repentance in the usual manner that Mr Houston may baptize her said child".⁸⁹ Whatever specific procedures were involved in the "usual manner", the one thing necessary by the woman would be a public profession of guilt before her congregation.

There were frequent requests from sessions to presbyteries to give counsel regarding the proper action in relation to church members found guilty of adultery. Such was the procedure when a case of adultery between two members of Gillespie's congregation came to light in 1722. The presbytery then gave Gillespie and his session the authority to make the final determination whether or not to absolve them from Church censure.⁹⁰

But the Presbytery of Donegal felt the need for a firm and definite policy. This is not surprising, for of all the early presbyteries, Donegal was the most 'frontier' and needed, therefore, the strongest regulations relating to sexual laxity. At its June 1735 meeting rules were laid down for the admitting to the ordinances of the Church people guilty of "uncleanness": in the case of fornication the parties must give "publick satisfaction" in their local congregation. "In case of Adultry single or double the persons or persons shall not be absolved untill ye matter be first reported to...the Presbytery and they consulted in ye affair".⁹¹

In addition to the cases of moral discipline which came before the presbyteries there were the occasional disruptions in churches between parishioners, or difficulties with a single obstinate member, which had to be settled beyond the parish level.

⁸⁹ New Castle, p. 161; JPH, XV, p. 194.

⁹⁰ Ibid., p. 47; JPH, XV, p. 76.

⁹¹ Donegal, pp. 65-66.

On March 15, 1726 the Presbytery of New Castle was asked to settle a problem that echoed something of certain disputes recorded in the gospels. The Elk River congregation and its session had not been able to come to a satisfactory decision as to who was going to sit where. The presbytery determined that the "Minister's seat be next on ye right hand, of the Pulpit" and the next day assigned pews to members of the congregation in an attempt to settle them, physically at least, in their church. William Finney was given his choice of the seats that had been assigned previously to Andrew Steel and William Hoge; Abraham Emmet and Roger Lawson were required to exchange seats. ⁹²

When Daniel McConnel came before the Presbytery of Donegal in April of 1735 to ask to be released from a censure placed on him three years earlier, the presbytery examined him

in order to bring him to a sense of sin and affence for wch he was laid under censure. [But] he could not be brought to any...visible mense of the sin, but did....[display]....a spirit of obstinacy & contempt of all our Pbyal proceedings. ⁹³

Therefore, the presbytery refused to remove the censure, and McConnel indicated that "he appealed from the Judgmt of this Pby to the Synod, and accordingly was enjoined to give in the reasons of his appeal to the Moderator of this Pby some time before our next meeting". ⁹⁴

Being under the censure of a church court was a serious matter, and the presbyteries received constant appeals for their removal. These judicatures always were concerned in seeing the element of personal repentance before the Church censure was removed or modified. In November of 1729 the Presbytery of New Castle received a supplication from Thomas Caldwell "to have rased out of our Pbtry book a minute

⁹² New Castle, p. 103; JPH, XV, p. 108; Webster, op. cit., p. 383.

⁹³ Donegal, p. 51.

⁹⁴ Ibid.

concerning his Character to be a Contentious man by comon report & aledging yt ye said minute was prejudicial both to his spiritual & temporal Interest....". The presbytery could find no reason to change its minutes, but it did produce a "Certificate" for Caldwell. It may be wondered how much comfort this gave:

This is to Certify that Th[ough] Thomas Caldwell has been Concerned in some contentious purposes & has obtained thereby ye comon character of a contentious person yet it has never been Judicially proven yt he really is soe & yt we have some ground to believe yt for ye further he will be more Cautious in being concerned in such debates. ⁹⁵

It was not a testimonial which anyone would frame.

In two cases of discipline the Presbytery of New Castle ordered alterations to be made to a session's record book. The presbytery agreed in 1721 with Gillespie ⁹⁶ and his session at Elk River in their censuring of John Campbel and Elizabeth Wallace, who were involved in separate cases. But since Campbel had given repentence, the presbytery ordered "that all ye Minutes therein relating sd affair shall be rased out of their book". ⁹⁷ So also the minutes in the case of Elizabeth Wallace were to be altered, seeing that there were certain "Expressions in the record of sd session relating to this affair, not fit to be transmitted to posterity". ⁹⁸

The presbyteries were faced on occasion with the responsibility of settling matters between a local member and his pastor. In September of 1733 John Brandon complained to the Presbytery of Donegal that John Thomson had refused to baptize his child. After discovering that Brandon had rejected Thomson's ministry and had at first applied to a Church of England priest to have the child baptized, the presbytery

⁹⁵ New Castle, p. 158; JPH, XV, p. 192.

⁹⁶ George Gillespie was one of the ministers during this period most zealous for strict church discipline.

⁹⁷ New Castle, p. 37; JPH, XIV, p. 381.

⁹⁸ Ibid., p. 38; JPH, XIV, p. 382.

supported Thomson and approved of his conduct.

Seven years before Joseph McClean was condemned by the Presbytery of Philadelphia for his ungrounded charges against Mary Thomson, that presbytery had to deal with him in another serious matter. In November of 1733 McClean was found guilty of threatening "Mr. [Richard] Treats Ruine as a Minist[er] by endeavouring to get him Shaken out of his boat". McClean was ordered to give public satisfaction before the Abington congregation on the next "week-day meeting", and the clerk of the session of that church was directed to read the presbytery's order to the congregation after worship on the following Lord's Day.⁹⁹ It was most fortunate that colonial presbyteries rarely were faced with a man of such vindictive temperament.

When Timothy Griffith brings charges against David Evans, his minister, before the Presbytery of Philadelphia in December, 1739, the presbytery finds that Griffith has no basis for his complaints. Moreover, it discovers the accusations to be "justly censurable", and therewith suspends Griffith from "Church Privileges" until he repents of the action before Evans and the congregation. The following May Griffiths admits that he was wrong in the way he had addressed Evans, and his censure is removed.¹⁰⁰ Apparently Griffith had not 'repented' before the congregation, but his contrition before members of the presbytery fulfills the same design.

Occasionally the disciplining of an entire congregation became necessary. In the case already mentioned (Cf. Supra, p. 125) involving the Paxton congregation's rejection of Thomas Creaghead, the supply preacher sent by the Presbytery of Donegal, not only Creaghead, but the congregation, was censured. Regarding Paxton, the presbytery came to this resolution:

The People of Paxton have shown such disrespect to our Presbyterial order & authority yt we look upon our selves as under such discouragement

⁹⁹ Philadelphia, p. 2.

¹⁰⁰ Ibid., pp. 80, 90-91.

as to presbyterial Care & oversight & provision for yt people, yt we cannot think it our duty to appoint...[further] supplies, until they acknowledge their fault in rejecting our appointment as to Mr. Craighead, & until we have more assurance from them than we now have, yt our appoint[men]ts...[to them] shall meet with more kindly entertainment. ¹⁰¹

The presbyteries took direct action with congregations when they were dilatory in the payment of their ministers' salaries. In May of 1736, when the way was clear for the ordination and installation of Samuel Black at Brandywine, the Presbytery of Donegal ordered "that people to take care to pay up all their arrears for supplies before there be any appointment of Mr. Black's ordination[;] resolved that this order be observed in all such cases". ¹⁰² In 1738 the Presbytery of Philadelphia directed its moderator to write to a church that was backward in its payment to supplies, instructing them to fulfill their obligations, ¹⁰³ and Gillespie was appointed in 1721 by the Presbytery of New Castle to write to Welsh Tract directing that they fulfill the unpaid salary owed to David Evans. ¹⁰⁴ The same presbytery in 1727 ordered Boyd's session at Octorara to use all its diligence to collect his salary; "the sd session shall be Accountable to the Pby as to their diligence herein". ¹⁰⁵ Arrears owed to Thomson, ¹⁰⁶ Houston, ¹⁰⁷ and

¹⁰¹ Donegal, p. 137. Nevin, Alfred, Churches of the Valley, etc., Philadelphia, 1852, makes no reference to this incident in his section on the "Paxton and Derry Churches", pp. 257-270.

¹⁰² Ibid., p. 118.

¹⁰³ Philadelphia, p. 59.

¹⁰⁴ New Castle, p. 39; JPH, XIV, p. 382.

¹⁰⁵ Ibid., p. 121; JPH, XV, p. 161.

¹⁰⁶ Donegal, p. 4.

¹⁰⁷ New Castle, p. 134; JPH, XV, p. 177; Donegal, p. 12.

a minister's widow,¹⁰⁸ were also dealt with by the presbyteries.

Finally, in the area of presbyterial control of congregations, the Presbytery of Donegal went to an extreme. In 1735 it ordered the members of Bertram's congregations at Paxton and Derry to pay the charges of a law suit which had arisen in the civil court.¹⁰⁹ But it went even further in a similar case involving the vacant Nottingham congregation, for on October 13, 1736 the presbytery obliged certain members of that congregation to contribute their proportion to a legal suit which was pending. And "whoever of the congre shall...neglect to comply to these order[s] by contributing their proportion shall be debarred from Ch[urc]h Priveledges until they shall comply therewith".¹¹⁰

C. Internal organization of the presbyteries

1. Commissions and committees

In only one entry in the presbytery minutes of this period is a "Commission" mentioned,¹¹¹ yet the Presbyteries of New Castle, Philadelphia, and Donegal each had, at various times, standing committees which served essentially the same function. The Presbytery of New Castle, at its November 1725 meeting, appointed a Committee of the Presbytery "to take notice of any Emergent affairs untill our Next".¹¹² This committee was composed of four ministers, although only three were present when it met the following month. Here there were two ruling elders listed as being present,

¹⁰⁸ Donegal, p. 192.

¹⁰⁹ Ibid., p. 52.

¹¹⁰ Ibid., p. 135. Cf. Funk, Henry, D., "The Influence of the Presbyterian Church in Early American History", JPH, XII, p. 293. "As the student of history reads these records, he is astonished at the power which the sessions and presbyteries wielded in this early period of American Presbyterianism".

¹¹¹ Philadelphia, p. 10.

¹¹² New Castle. p. 103; JPH, XV, p. 108.

although none were assigned when the presbytery constituted the committee. It frequently happened that elders were listed in the minutes of committees, and while it is never absolutely clear whether or not they could vote in the matters of deliberation, the indications are that they could. This committee, meeting in December of 1725, received a call from the New Castle congregation for Gilbert Tennent, which it presented to him. ¹¹³

The first extant minutes of the Presbytery of Philadelphia, for November 9, 1733, were the minutes of the meeting of a committee of that presbytery. Just as with the New Castle committee, here a Moderator, and Clerk were chosen, and ruling elders were listed as present. The lines between the committees of the Presbytery of Philadelphia and the presbytery itself seemed to be quite indefinite, for these opening minutes record that "There came a Matter of Difference into the Committee or Presbry"; and in reference to a dispute: "The Presbry having spent due time in deliberating, on the affair came to this determination.....". ¹¹⁴ We can infer that the Presbytery of Philadelphia understood its committees to have no less authority than the presbytery itself. This was made explicit when, at a meeting on September 15, 1736, the presbytery instructed a committee "to act with Respect to it [a case of discipline] as if the whole Presbytery were present". ¹¹⁵ This committee of six ministers was appointed to ordain David Cowell and to look into charges of intemperance against Joseph Morgan. In the latter matter

[The Committee] can do no less than exercise the Discipline appointed by the Lord Jesus Christ.....The Committee do suspend the said Mr. Joseph Morgan from the Exercise of all Parts of his ministerial Function until he evidence a sincere Repentance. ¹¹⁶

¹¹³ Ibid.

¹¹⁴ Philadelphia, p. 1.

¹¹⁵ Ibid., p. 24.

¹¹⁶ Ibid., pp. 30-31.

Between the September 1736 and May 1737 meetings of the presbytery, this committee met three times, and, in addition to the items already mentioned, peaceably settled a dispute in a congregation,¹¹⁷ continued Morgan's suspension,¹¹⁸ and referred a matter to the Synod.¹¹⁹ Because of its successful operation the presbytery decided in September of 1737 that it would be expedient to appoint a Standing Committee of the presbytery to deal with any matter arising between the annual stated meetings.¹²⁰

Three years after its formation, the Presbytery of Donegal appointed its moderator plus two other ministers "as a standing committee" to deal with any business which might arise before the next session. The Standing Committee was to deal especially with applications from those outside the Presbytery of Donegal who desired to preach within its bounds--those who "apply to us in a regular way".¹²¹ The following year, at the November 1736 meeting, the presbytery appointed supplies to particular vacancies, but closed by saying "unless the committee of the Pby shall see cause to order it otherwise".¹²²

While there is no record of the Committee changing any appointments, it did, from time to time, make new assignments for supplies. At a meeting of the Committee on February 8, 1737 a delegation from the Paxton congregation indicated their unqualified repentance for refusing to receive Thomas Creaghead; they "desire

¹¹⁷ Ibid., pp. 25-28.

¹¹⁸ Ibid., p. 40.

¹¹⁹ Ibid.

¹²⁰ Ibid., p. 49.

¹²¹ Donegal, p. 98.

¹²² Ibid., p. 140.

that the committee may appoint them supplies as they judge convenient for the future".¹²³ This was three and a half months after the presbytery had censured them.

Even after the presbyteries had formed 'Standing Committees' they still on occasion would appoint pro re nata committees, usually to visit a congregation to help settle some particular problem which had arisen. A few of them were to examine candidates, ordain licentiates, or receive ministers into the presbytery. The Presbytery of New Castle appointed nine such committees, the Presbytery of Philadelphia four, and the Presbytery of Donegal three. The lines between the authority of these committees and the presbyteries for whom they acted were at times indefinite. A committee of six, appointed by the Presbytery of New Castle in November of 1730, met the following month, having "formed ymselves into a Psby pro Re Nata".¹²⁴

The appointment of committees to meet on some particular piece of business while the presbytery was in session was quite rare. The presbyteries were small enough to transact nearly all their business in plenary session. The three such committees which were appointed during presbytery meetings in this period were all directed to the task of examining candidates in some particular part of their trials for ordination. Two of these committees were appointed in the Presbytery of New Castle, the other in the Presbytery of Philadelphia.

2. Meetings

There was not a great deal of difference in the number of meetings held by the four presbyteries we have been studying. New Brunswick and Donegal averaged about four meetings a year, New Castle between four and five meetings a year, and

¹²³ Ibid., p. 144.

¹²⁴ New Castle, p. 173; JPH, XV, p. 202.

Philadelphia three meetings a year. The largest number of meetings held in one year was nine, by the Presbytery of New Castle in 1724; the smallest was one, by the Presbytery of Philadelphia in 1735.¹²⁵ The fewer meetings of the Presbytery of Philadelphia is explained by its extensive use of a Committee. Moreover, since both it and the Synod were 'centered' in Philadelphia there was more of tendency than with the other presbyteries for some of its responsibilities to be handled by the 'higher' court or the Commission.

The Presbytery of Philadelphia generally held only one stated meeting a year, in May. It is not always clear what meetings of the Presbytery of Donegal were 'stated', but each year it held a meeting in the spring (usually in April) and one in the autumn (in September or October). Spring and autumn meetings were general also for the Presbytery of New Castle. With very few exceptions all the presbyteries would hold a meeting either during or immediately following the meeting of the Synod in Philadelphia each year.

Attendance at the meetings of these presbyteries was quite good, especially considering the many difficulties often involved. Following is a chart showing the average number of ministers who were members, along with their average attendance, and the average attendance of ruling elders.

	<u>New Castle</u>	<u>Donegal</u>	<u>Philadelphia</u>	<u>New Brunswick</u>
Average number of ministers on roll	8	7	8	5
Average attendance of ministers	6 (75%)	6 (86%)	5 (63%)	4 (80%)
Average attendance of ruling elders	4	4	2	2

Taking the overall figures, the ministerial attendance was 75% of total membership,

¹²⁵ If it had not been for a pro re nata meeting of this presbytery on September 19, 1735 there would have been nineteen months between meetings, and two full years between stated meetings.

while the attendance of ruling elders was 57% of its potential.¹²⁶ The Presbytery of Donegal showed the most faithful attendance of both ministers and ruling elders.

D. Relations among the presbyteries

On a number of occasions the presbyteries dealt with certain matters among themselves, and the perennial topic was the supplying of vacancies. At the May 24, 1738 meeting of the Presbytery of Philadelphia, James Martin, a member of the Presbytery of Lewes, was present, representing that presbytery. He indicated that there were many vacancies in Lewes which could not be supplied, and that it was the desire of his presbytery for the Reverend Hugh Carlisle to itinerate there. Carlisle had been received two years earlier from the Presbytery of New Castle but had not been settled as a pastor in the Presbytery of Philadelphia. The request was granted, with Carlisle's acceptance, and the presbytery told him that he had "full liberty in yt matter, under Direction of sd. Pry. of Lewes".¹²⁷ The following year the Presbytery of Philadelphia "employs" James Campbell, a Scot who had been licensed by the Presbytery of New Castle, to itinerate in its vacancies.¹²⁸

Not all inter-presbytery relations were so amicable. In November of 1735 the Presbytery of Donegal was informed that the Presbytery of New Castle had appointed some of its candidates to supply Nottingham and Brandywine, vacancies in the Presbytery of Donegal. Donegal considered this "very irregular" and believed that New Castle had "Extended their authority beyond the lines of their jurisdiction". Therefore,

¹²⁶ This is based on the assumption that a ruling elder would be attending a meeting of a presbytery only when his minister was present. If the figure were tabulated from the total number of congregations within the presbyteries the percentage, of course, would be much lower.

¹²⁷ Philadelphia, p. 56.

¹²⁸ Ibid., p. 69.

We agree that it is directly contrary to our...judgmt that any of said young men supply said vacancies according to ye appointment of New Castle Pby, or by any order whatsoever until they first apply to this Pby. unto which said vacancies belong & receive orders & directions from us to that purpose. 129

Each congregation of the Presbytery of Donegal was to be notified that it was not to allow any such ministers or probationers to preach until they applied to the presbytery, producing "necessary credentials, & so put themselves under our direction".

Finally, a letter was to be sent to the Presbytery of New Castle, "signifying our resentment of their proceedings, & to let them know that we condemn all such proceedings as tending to bring in the greatest confusion imaginable". This letter suggested that the moderator of the Presbytery of New Castle call that body together in a pro re nata meeting "in order to give any late come Ministers or Preachers who may desire it....concurrence in a regular way in [disposing?] their labours within our bounds". 130 Apparently this dilligence was worthwhile, for a year and a half later, when the people of Pequea wanted David Alexander, a probationer under the care of the Presbytery of New Castle, to supply them for several Sundays, they made an orderly application to their presbytery. It was recorded that "The Pby in compliance wth said supplication have sent a letter to ye Pby of New Castle to yt purpose". 131

Five months before the Presbytery of New Castle instructed its congregations not to allow John Wilson to preach (Cf. Supra, p. 122) it had determined that "we cannot pass a judgement directly upon him", because he was a member of the Presbytery of Philadelphia. He had been itinerating in the bounds of New Castle, with their permission, but now, when the question of the validity of his credentials arose, this

129 Donegal, p. 98.

130 Ibid.

131 Ibid. p. 141.

presbytery decided to send a letter to the Presbytery of Philadelphia indicating the problem. But this was to be done only if "Mr Willson return to their bounds".¹³²

In 1734 John Thomson of the Presbytery of Donegal received a letter from a member of the Presbytery of New Castle, in the name of that presbytery, asking Donegal to direct Thomas Creaghead to attend the next meeting of New Castle in order to answer "certain charges against him".¹³³ Donegal replied at its August meeting that it could take no such action, since "Mr. Craighead...[is] not an orderly member of our Pby....But that a good correspondence may be continued betwixt the two Phys., we [all?] agree that in the time of next Synod both Phys. have a friendly conference about the matter & that a letter be written be [i.e. by] Mr. Thomson, to ye Pby of N.C.". ¹³⁴ In October it was recorded that "ye conference of ye two Phys about Craighead" was held at the time of the Synod and that "The motion concerning Mr. Craighead being ordered to appear before the Pby of N.C..... was rejected by ye Majority of both Phys.". ¹³⁵

On one occasion a congregation was released from one presbytery to another without any action by the Synod. When the Presbytery of Philadelphia in 1738 allowed a portion of the Maidenhead and Hopewell church to be organized into a new congregation the group asked the presbytery to be dismissed to the care of the Presbytery of New Brunswick; the permission was granted. ¹³⁶

It was not unusual for a candidate to be examined and licensed by one presbytery, only to be ordained by another. Thus John Tennent was examined by the Presbytery

¹³² New Castle, p. 162; JPH, XV, p. 195.

¹³³ Donegal, p. 41.

¹³⁴ Ibid., p. 42. There is no indication why Donegal referred to Creaghead as a disorderly member.

¹³⁵ Ibid., pp. 49-50.

¹³⁶ Philadelphia, p. 65.

of New Castle and licensed by that judicatory on September 18, 1729.¹³⁷ In the following months he refused three calls from congregations in the presbytery; he was ordained on November 19, 1730¹³⁸ by the Presbytery of Philadelphia, after accepting a call to be pastor at Freehold, New Jersey.

A fairly common practice was for a presbytery to invite 'correspondents' from another presbytery to be present at a meeting when their attendance would be helpful in some particular matter facing the court. In such a case it appears that the correspondents were considered voting members of the presbytery they were visiting.

E. Conclusions

From our review of these records it is evident that while there was diversity of practice among the presbyteries in the way they maintained the supervision of church life in their respective areas, there was unity in the authority which they all considered their right and duty to exercise. They felt completely free, for example, to experiment with the use of committees which had the full power of presbytery, when the need arose.

There was an emerging pattern of the orderly disciplining of congregations and ministers, local matters generally being left to the local sessions and the disciplining of ministers always being the prerogative of the presbyteries to which they belonged. The authority of ruling elders in meetings of presbyteries and committees was not always clearly established; the 'higher judicatories' were still considered to be basically ministerial courts.

Attendance at meetings of presbyteries was remarkably good and showed the members' definite need of and subjection to these judicatories. The Mission of the Church was of foremost concern, and although the ministry was woefully undermanned, every effort was expended to furnish the Gospel to the rapidly expanding and mobile

¹³⁷ New Castle, p. 156; JPH, XV, p. 190.

¹³⁸ Webster, op. cit., p. 421.

population of immigrants. ¹³⁹

Yet just at the time when unity of purpose and Mission were most needed, a wedge was being driven into American Presbyterianism. The ironical aspect of this period of history is that the very expansion of population which called upon the full forces of the church was the basic cause of the split. We must turn now to the role played by polity in the schism of 1741 which divided the Presbyterian Church into 'New Side' and 'Old Side'.

¹³⁹ Following the Synod's petition to and response from the Governor of Virginia (Cf. Supra, p. 106) great efforts were made to supply the frontier settlements in that colony. This task fell almost entirely upon the Presbytery of Donegal.

CHAPTER SIX

Polity and the Old Side-New Side ControversyA. Background of the controversy1. Subscription

During the 1720's American Presbyterianism began to feel ground tremors, mighty reverberations from a Britain which was experiencing divisions of earthquake proportions. The rumbles were being caused by the question of subscription to the Westminster Symbols.¹

The Westminster Confession of Faith had been in existence for two generations before it became a required object of assent in the Church of Scotland. It was in 1690 that it was ratified by the Scottish Parliament "as the public and avowed Confession of this Church, containing the sum and substance of the doctrine of the Reformed Churches".² That same year the General Assembly of the Church of Scotland stated that it was to be subscribed to by probationers, ministers, and elders who would henceforth be received by the Church. Three years later all ministers were included, and in 1707 the Act of Security (at the time of the union of Scotland and England) stated that all university teachers were to subscribe to the Confession as the confession of their personal faith.³

The struggle in Scotland soon centered in one personality, John Simson, who was appointed Professor of divinity at the University of Glasgow in 1708. He was charged in 1715 with holding Arminian views and passing them on to his students. He was acquitted two years later by the General Assembly, but received a rebuke and was

¹ For the best brief descriptions of the controversy in Great Britain, Cf. Briggs, Charles A., American Presbyterianism, etc., Edinburgh, 1885, pp. 194-208 and Trinterud, The Forming of An American Tradition, etc., Philadelphia, 1949, pp. 39-47.

² Quoted in Briggs, op. cit., p. 200.

³ Burleigh, J.H.S., A Church History of Scotland, London, 1960, pp. 286-287.

warned "not to attribute too much to natural reason and the power of corrupt nature to the disparagement of revelation and efficacious free grace".⁴

Yet the General Assembly of 1718 forbade any further tests of a candidate's 'orthodoxy' than those which were laid down by the Assembly itself. This was in reaction to the over-zealous Presbytery of Auchterarder that had devised the "Auchterarder Creed",⁵ an absurdly minute investigation into a candidate's beliefs.

By 1726 Simson was on the firing line again for certain teachings which the strict subscriptionists considered unfaithful to the Confession. The case dragged on for three years, and in 1729 Simson finally was ordered to cease teaching, although he was not removed officially from his teaching post.

The Ulster Scots also tended toward subscription, taking their cue from Scotland. It became a requirement in 1698 that all licentiates "be obliged to Subscribe the Confession of Faith, in all the Articles thereof, as the Confession of their Faith".⁶ Seven years later the Ulster Synod became more exact in its subscription and required adherence to Reformed worship, discipline, and polity.⁷

But the following decade saw continual dissension in Ulster between those who wanted a strong subscription and those (the "Belfast Society", many of whose members had been trained under Simson) who were opposed to any subscription to creeds.⁸ Under the leadership of Robert Craighead the "Pacific Act" was adopted in 1720 by

⁴ Quoted in Ibid., p. 288.

⁵ For a defense of the Auchterarder position Cf. "A Letter to a Gentleman, concerning the Auchterarder Affair," n.p., n.d.

⁶ Records of The General Synod of Ulster, Vol. I, Belfast, 1890, p. 34.

⁷ Ibid., p. 100. For a compendium of the development of Ulster polity, Cf. Thomson, John (ed.), An Abstract of the laws and rules of the general Synod of Ulster, etc., Dublin, 1803.

⁸ Cf. Reid, J.S., History of the Presbyterian Church in Ireland, Belfast, 1867, Vol. III, Chap. 25.

the General Synod as an attempt to sail through the perilous Scylla and Charybdis. This Act called the Westminster Confession "a very good abridgment of the Christian doctrines contain'd in the Sacred Scriptures".⁹ While requiring subscription prior to ordination, it allowed for a candidate to propose any "scruples" he had. His presbytery was to determine whether such scruples were "consistent with the substance of the [Christian] doctrine", but the Pacific act did not pacify, and six years later the non-subscriptionists were expelled from the Synod.¹⁰

In England matters were acute because of a widely suspected and sometimes acknowledged anti-trinitarianism which was getting a foothold in the Presbyterian and Independent ranks. After a final split, in 1719, between the subscribers and the non-subscribers many English dissenters drifted into Unitarianism. The avowed Arianism of some of the English Presbyterians who refused subscription served to add fuel to the subscriptionists' fiery arguments.

During this period the young Church in America had the real advantage of being able to view these developments in Britain with, if not a detached interest, certainly a less involved one. At this time American Presbyterianism had faced no problems of heresy among its ministers; true, the possibility loomed large in the minds of some, but the church had time to move more cautiously than its British brethren.

When in 1721 Gillespie made his proposal to the Synod (Cf. Supra, p. 101) Jonathan Dickinson misunderstood the move as an attempt to force subscription upon the church. Having been moderator of that meeting of Synod, it was for him to deliver the opening sermon at the 1722 meeting,¹¹ and in his sermon, on II Timothy

⁹ Records of the General Synod of Ulster, op. cit., p. 521.

¹⁰ Cf. Ibid., Vol. II, pp. 103-105; 108-109.

¹¹ Dickinson was the leading native-born member of the Synod, born in Hatfield, Massachusetts in 1688 and graduated from Yale in 1706, the year the original Presbytery was formed. He breathed the more cosmopolitan New England spirit, to which the Scots and Ulster Scots had not become acclimatized.

3:17, Dickinson struck out at attempts to introduce subscription. But, if premature, it was an eloquent exposition of the 'liberal' position. Human creeds are divisive. They usurp the authority of the Bible and claim for the Church an authority which Christ never committed to it. The real thing necessary in the Church is to have those who will be faithful to Christ, he said; these are the people who will give us "a complete Rule of Doctrine, Worship and Discipline". Therefore, "It's a bold invasion of Christ's Royal Power, and a rude reflection upon his Wisdom and Faithfulness, for proud Worms to make any Addition to that perfect Pattern, which he has given us".

Ministers have the commission to interpret God's commands, but no man is compelled to accept these interpretations beyond the point where they appear to him to be "just and true". Dickinson then illustrates the implausibility of his position:

Though some plain and comprehensive Creed or Confession of Faith (for distinguishing such as receive, from those who reject the Faith once delivered to the Saints) may be useful and necessary since the worst Heresies may take shelter under the express of Words of Scripture. Yet we are by no means to force these credenda, upon any of differing Sentiments.

We may not so much as shut out of Communion, any such Dissenters, as we can charitably hope Christ won't shut out of Heaven: But should open the Doors of the Church as wide as Christ opens the Gates of Heaven; and receive one another, as Christ also received us, to the Glory of God.

And tho' we ought to reject both the Heresy, and the Communion of those, who deny what we esteem the Fundamental Truths of our Holy Religion; yet even these essential Articles of Christianity, may not be imposed by Civil Coercions, temporal Penalties, or any other way whatsoever.¹²

While one cannot but be impressed with the openness of spirit and the true desire for unity and fellowship manifest in this sermon, it is impossible to overlook the basic contradictions. What is the purpose of distinguishing between those who are faithful and those who may hold "the worst Heresies", if these "credenda" are to be powerless? If we keep the doors of the Church open as wide as Dickinson apparently understands the doors of Heaven to be, how are we to determine "to reject both the

¹² Dickinson, J., A Sermon Preached at the Opening of the Synod at Philadelphia: September 19, 1722, etc., Boston, 1723, pp. 1-2, 13, 17-19, 22-23; printed in Armstrong, M.W., et. al., The Presbyterian Enterprise, etc., Philadelphia, 1956, pp. 26-27.

Heresy, and the Communion" of those who deny basic points of Christian doctrine; and most important, how are we going to determine what are the basic points?

During the 1722 Synod we can imagine that several talked with Dickinson behind the scenes following his sermon, in an attempt to show him that subscription was not what had been behind Gillespie's overture. Five days after he preached his sermon Dickinson and the others who had protested the overture at the previous meeting of Synod removed their "protestation" and submitted their articles on church government, which were unanimously accepted (Cf. Supra, pp. 101-102).

Things remained quiet. The first record of subscription within the American Church was in 1724 when, at the meeting of the Presbytery of New Castle on September 22, William McMillan signed the statement: "I do own the Westminster Confession of faith as the Confession of my faith. Sic subscribitur. Will: McMillan".¹³ Two years later Archibald McCook and Hugh Stevenson were licensed by the same presbytery after they had "subscribed the Westmi[n]ster confession of faith as ye confess, of their faiths...[and] promised subjection to this Presb:". ¹⁴

There appear to have been no open repercussions from this action, but there was a growing feeling that if the church were to remain one and at the same time issue some safeguard against heresy it must unite, as the Synod, in adopting a common Standard. All this was brought into the open by John Thomson in 1727. Thomson, a member of the Presbytery of New Castle, read before the Synod an overture proposing the adoption of the Westminster Symbols as the official Standards of the Church. The text was not included in the Synod's minutes, nor, in fact, was any mention made of the proposal that year. But on September 18, 1728, the Presbytery of New Castle, holding a pro re nata meeting in Philadelphia at the opening of the

¹³ Minutes of the Presbytery of New Castle, Vol. I. (hereafter in this chapter, New Castle), p. 89; printed in JPH, XV, p. 98.

¹⁴ New Castle, p. 112; JPH, XV, p. 116.

Synod, recorded

The Presby both now and formerly haveing deliberated & Seriously read and considered an overture wch had been laid before ye Revd Synod last year, and read before ym, containing an expedient to prevent Error & heresy the Presby doe unanimously agree that sd overture be laid before ye Revd Synod to be by them Considered. ¹⁵

Two days later the overture was presented in writing to the Synod. Since it was a delegated meeting the court postponed final consideration until the following year, even though there were seventeen ministers and twelve ruling elders present. This was done because the Synod judged "this to be a very important affair". It was ordered that "the members of each Presbytery present...give timeous notice thereof to the absent members, and it is agreed that the next be a full Synod". ¹⁶

During the following year Dickinson entered the field and challenged Thomson's overture, which by this time had been printed. A careful reading shows that the overture was made out of a serious concern for the well-being of the Church. Trinterud suggests that the movement toward subscription was prompted by an Ulster Scot desire "to gain complete control" in the Synod and "the hatred that the Scots and Scotch-Irish had for the Old England"; a hatred which they were venting now on the "new" England. ¹⁷ Such an assertion is not founded on fact.

Thomson began his overture by stating: "I would be heartily grieved if the following overture, or any thing in it, should...prove the occasion of any heat or contention among us. Sure I am that every thing of this kind is far from my intention, and I hope all my brethren will...be persuaded of the peaceableness

¹⁵ Ibid., p. 137; JPH, XV, p. 178.

¹⁶ Records, p. 91.

¹⁷ Cf. Trinterud, op. cit., pp. 47-48.

and sincerity of my intentions.....".¹⁸ Moreover, the proposal was in no way aimed at the New Englanders in the Synod; New England Congregationalism had long since adopted the Westminster Confession. The proposal, suggested by Thomson, himself an Ulster Scot, was directed against his own homeland. He said: "When Arminianism, Socinianism, Deism, Freethinking, &c., do like a deluge overflow even the reformed churches, both established and dissenting, to such a degree, have we not reason to consult our own safety?"¹⁹

Trinterud makes the curious suggestion that what was at the back of Thomson's mind was the subjection of the Synod either to the General Assembly of the Church of Scotland or the General Synod of Ulster; he says: "Thomson had called it a disadvantage that there was no superior judicature to bring the synod to account if it went into error and heresy".²⁰ The present author has searched diligently, but in vain, for a hint of such a suggestion. What Thomson does say in the overture is that "every church, as an organized body politic, methodised by order and government, is also obliged to act with Christian vigilance and sagacity in maintaining and defending gospel truth".²¹ He goes on to call the Synod

to exert ourselves and the authority with which we are invested, in vindication and defense of the truths which we profess, and for preventing, the ingress and spreading of error. Eighthly, that we are so a particular church as not to be a part of any particular church in the world, with which we are united by the joint exercise of church government, and therefore we are not accountable to the judicial inquiry of any superior ecclesiastical judicature upon earth, and therefore if we do not exert the authority inherent in us for maintaining the purity of gospel truth, it is not in the power of any superior

¹⁸ Quoted in Hodge, Charles A., The Constitutional History of the Presbyterian Church in the United States of America, Philadelphia, 1851, I, p. 137. Cf. pp. 136-141 for the whole overture.

¹⁹ Ibid., p. 139.

²⁰ Trinterud, op. cit., p. 48.

²¹ Hodge, op. cit., p. 137.

ecclesiastical judicature to call us in question for our neglect, or for our errors or heresies should we be corrupted in them. ²²

Far from lamenting the fact that his church was not under Scottish or Ulster Scot ecclesiastical control, Thomson is calling on it to exercise the power of the keys which it possesses only because it is a particular church, with no higher judicatory to which to appeal.

Most important to note is that when the overture was presented in 1727 and 1728, on either occasion the Scots and Ulster Scots could have pushed the matter through the Synod by virtue of their numerical strength, if their desire had been to get the 'upper hand'. Great restraint was shown in all these dealings, and there is not the slightest indication that any group was attempting deceptively to gain its own ends. The delegated Synod of 1728 insisted that all be given the opportunity to discuss the matter in a full Synod, and it postponed any action until the following year.

Thomson stated that the church had the right and duty to adopt the Westminster Confession, "for the public confession of our faith, as we are a particular organized church". He suggested that the Synod oblige the presbyteries to require all candidates for the ministry "to subscribe, or otherwise acknowledge coram presbyterio" this Confession. In effect this would also apply to any ordained minister received into the bounds of the Synod and also to its present members. Any minister in the Synod would not preach anything opposed to the Confession, "unless, first, he propose the said point to the Presbytery or Synod to be by them discussed.....". Thomson appealed that the Synod might not be deluded by a "mistaken charity". ²³

Dickinson's challenge to Thomson, Remarks upon a discourse intitled An Overture presented to the Reverend Synod, etc. was published in 1729. In it Dickinson presented

²² Ibid., p. 138.

²³ Cf. Ibid., pp. 140-141.

a rather similar argument to that which he had used in his 1722 synodical sermon. He said that a common acknowledgement of Christ as Lord and of the Scriptures as a Standard were "a sufficient bond of union for the being or well-being of any church under heaven". Rather than insisting on subscription, he called for a strict examination of a candidate's religious 'experience', "that the ministers of the gospel be most diligent, faithful and painful in the discharge of their awful trust". Human creeds and confessions, according to Dickinson, are not in any way required by Scripture and "a subscription to any human composure as the test of our orthodoxy is to make it the standard of our faith, and thereby to give it the honour due only to the word of God".²⁴ Clearly, it was not the Westminster Confession which bothered Dickinson, but any Confession at all. This makes most surprising his active participation in the drafting and approving of the Adopting Act in the Synod of 1729.²⁵

The act was obviously a compromise, a via media, but one, it will be noted, which was adopted unanimously.²⁶ It stated²⁷ that the Synod did not claim to impose its faith on other men's consciences, yet it believed that it was "undoubtedly obliged to take care that the faith once delivered to the saints be kept pure and uncorrupt among us, and so handed down to our posterity". It was therefore agreed

that all the ministers of the Synod, or that shall hereafter be admitted into this Synod, shall declare their agreement in, and approbation of, the Confession of Faith, with the Larger and Shorter Catechisms of the Assembly of Divines at Westminster, as being in all the essential and necessary articles, good forms of sound words and systems of Christian doctrine, and do also adopt

²⁴ As quoted in Trinterud, op. cit., pp. 46-47 and Hodge, op. cit., p. 144.

²⁵ One writer has referred, somewhat harshly, to this tract of Dickinson's as "a hasty and ill-considered production, the doctrines of which he soon and entirely abandoned". Quoted in Trinterud, op. cit., p. 48.

²⁶ One minister, David Elmer, declared himself "not prepared" to subscribe in 1729, but subscribed during the following year at his presbytery, Philadelphia. Cf. Records, pp. 94, 97.

²⁷ Records, p. 94.

the said Confession and Catechisms as the confession of our faith.

The presbyteries were directed to bar any candidate for the ministry who would not either sign or verbally assent to "all the essential and necessary articles" of the Symbols. Following the General Synod of Ulster, it was stated that if any minister or candidate had any "scruple" about any of the articles of the Standards "he shall at the time of his making said declaration declare his sentiments to the Presbytery or Synod, who shall, notwithstanding, admit him to the exercise of the ministry within our bounds, and to ministerial communion, if the Synod or Presbytery shall judge his scruple or mistake to be only about articles not essential and necessary in doctrine, worship, or government". If such a judicatory

shall judge such ministers or candidates erroneous in essential and necessary articles of faith, the Synod or Presbytery shall declare them incapable of communion with them. And the Synod do solemnly agree, that none of us will traduce or use any opprobrious terms of those that differ from us in these extra-essential and not necessary points of doctrine, but treat them with the same friendship, kindness, and brotherly love, as if they had not differed from us in such sentiments.

The members of the Synod then made any 'scruples' they had, finding none of these 'essential', and made explicit that with regard to the twentieth and twenty-third chapters of the Confession they "do not receive those articles in any such sense as to suppose the civil magistrate hath a controlling power over Synod with respect to the exercise of their ministerial authority; or power to persecute any for their religion.....". With this, the Confession and catechisms were adopted. ²⁸

This rightly may be considered the crucial turning point in American Presbyterianism, for what had been the practice was now formalized: that church courts had authority, and would exercise control over the admission of those who would minister within their bounds, and that now these would be a common Standard from which to

²⁸ Ibid., p. 95. At this meeting the Synod unanimously approved of the Westminster documents dealing with worship and government and "do earnestly recommend the same to all their members, to be by them observed as near as circumstances will allow...". Ibid.

proceed. What had been implicit was made explicit: that the Presbyterian Church in America was a Confessional Church. Trinterud rightly observes that the rigid subscriptionists had been too much interested in doctrinal conformity, alone, to preserve the truth, while Dickinson was concerned with the holy living of ministers. That this spirit of Dickinson's had a strong influence upon the 1729 action of the Synod is of prime importance. But if the doctrinal consideration had been left 'open' a grave disservice would have been done the Church, and the Synod would have renounced its judicial responsibility. The balance of these two impulses was delicate indeed, but it was to find permanent embodiment at the formation of the first General Assembly.

In spite of the real achievement realized by the adopting of the Westminster Symbols there were still bound to be divergences in interpreting and implementing the action.²⁹ The authority of the judicatories certainly was enhanced by their being given the determination with regard to 'scruples', and this responsibility, in practice, fell almost solely upon the presbyteries. No individual had the right to decide for himself what was essential and what was non-essential in the Standards; it was the corporate task of the church, through its courts. We have seen the action taken by the Presbytery of New Castle, but we do not know if the other presbyteries had been requiring any form of subscription prior to 1729. Following the Synod's action apparently all the presbyteries faithfully complied.

On the first leaf of the minute book of the Presbytery of Donegal there is written "A Formula Wherein to subscribe & Adopt the Westminster Confession of Faith & Catechisms". It is signed by seventeen ministers and says, in part: "I....am

²⁹ Cf. Briggs, op. cit., p. 221. Here Briggs wishes that the spirit of the Adopting Act had always been evident in the church, so that there would not be "strife and discussion on account of difference with respect to unessential and unnecessary articles". The irony is that eight years after these words were published Briggs was suspended from the Presbyterian ministry for espousing biblical criticism.

fully persuaded Yt so far as I can...understand said Confession & Catechism they are in all things agreeable to ye Word of God taking ym in ye plain & obvious sense & meaning of ye words.....". They are acknowledged "as the Confession of My Faith", and promise is given to "Conform" to the Directory "in my practice as far as in Emergent Circumstances I can adhere unto".³⁰ When the Presbytery of New Castle met on September 2, 1730 each member made written subscription to this statement:

We the ministers of ye Pesby of New Castle whose names are underwritten do by this our act of subscribing our Names to these presents solemnly declare and testify that we own & acknowledge the Westminster Confession and Catechisms to be the Confession of our faith being in all things agreeable to the word of God so far as we are able to Judge & discern, taking them in ye true genuine and obvious sense of ye words.³¹

It is not possible to know exactly what was intended by these formulae, but it has been suggested that these two presbyteries were moving beyond the intention of the Synod. Yet to imagine that the option of making 'scruples' was eliminated by the Presbyteries of Donegal and New Castle³² is not supported by the minutes. New Castle records on December 30, 1730 that William Orr and Benjamin Campbell, both candidates from Ireland, had some "scrupling" about the presbytery's "way of adopting ye confession of f[ai]th".³³ The presbytery shows that it is not substituting its own formula for the Synod's adopting act since it produces for Orr and Campbell the minutes of both the Synod and the presbytery regarding subscription, with which they are satisfied.

But the next few years revealed a growing fear on the part of some of the members of the Synod that there might be an influx of ministers from Britain who could be tinged with heresy. The Hemphill case in 1735 brought things to a head, and though

³⁰ Mss. minutes of the Presbytery of Donegal, Vol. I (hereafter in this chapter, Donegal), n.p.

³¹ New Castle, n.p.; JPH, XV, p. 205.

³² Trinterud, op. cit., p. 50, says that these presbyteries demanded "unqualified subscription".

³³ New Castle, p. 173; JPH, XV, p. 203.

this incident clearly showed that subscription was no fool-proof safeguard against heresy, some of the Synod's members were determined that a rigid adherence to the Standards was the answer.

Moreover, William Tennent had begun the private training of young men for the ministry; first in his manse at Neshimany, Pennsylvania and then in a small building he built for the purpose, which became known, derisively, as the "Log College".³⁴ A number of ministers were alarmed. Here would be the perfect way for heresy to creep into the church. Up until this time all ministers had a degree from a British, Continental, or New England university. If there were men privately trained, as four already had been,³⁵ they could enter the ministry through one of the presbyteries, and the church as a whole would have no control over them. That the fears of doctrinal heresy proved ungrounded in no way detracts from our being able to understand the reactions of the strict subscriptionists when faced with these unpleasant possibilities.

A great many of this group were Ulster Scots who still were trying to live in the Old World with all its ways and outlooks. Trinterud³⁶ is quite correct in noting that the other party was comprised of younger men who had been trained in the colonies and who were attempting to revitalize the church with a new spirit. But owing to the circumstances, the conservative group smelled heresy and corruption in every change. Therefore, at the Synod in 1736, an overture was presented to strengthen subscription by eliminating certain "expressions or distinctions in the first or

³⁴ For a full account, Cf. Alexander, Archibald, Biographical Sketches of the Founder and Principal Alumni of the Log College, etc., Philadelphia, n.d.; Murphy, T., The Presbytery of the Log College, Philadelphia, 1890; and Ingram, George H., "Biographies of the Alumni of the Log College", JPH, XIII, pp. 175-184, 217-223, 255-266, 297-319; XIV, pp. 1-27.

³⁵ Gilbert, John, and William, Jr. Tennent, along with Samuel Blair. All four were licensed and/or ordained by the Presbytery of Philadelphia.

³⁶ Cf. Trinterud, op. cit., p. 76.

preliminary act of our Synod". The Synod reaffirmed the subscription "without the least variation or alteration, and without any regard to said distinctions".³⁷

The interesting thing to note is that while a number of the men who made up the New Side five years later were present (including William Tennent and William Tennent, Jr.) this overture was approved by the Synod nemine contradicente. If this was a "substitute Constitution",³⁸ taking the place of the 1729 Adopting Act, it certainly was not a maneuver by which "the Scotch-Irish party were driving for an all-powerful synod through which they would be able to root out the growing revival".³⁹ It was heresy which was uppermost in the mind of a Synod whose hands still burned from the Hemphill affair. This is evident from the fact that a number of the staunch supporters of the revival voted for this restating of the act of subscription.

In other words, the lines were not yet sharply drawn. Subscription divided the Synod on 'psychological' lines, reflecting the differing temperaments of Old World and New World. The subscription struggle had strained the nerve and spirit of the church, but it was the revival movement which cut across all ethnic considerations and ripped the Synod wide open. The tearing was rapid once it began, and it began with a basic disregard for church order: the intrusion of ministers into the parishes of others.

2. 'Intrusion'

It is not our purpose to detail the revival movement⁴⁰ but to limit our consideration to the part played by church order. Growing from his association with Theodorus Jacobus Frelinghuysen, which began when he was ordained and installed at New Brunswick, New Jersey in 1726, Gilbert Tennent, the eldest son of William,

³⁷ Records, pp. 126-127.

³⁸ Nichols, James H., "Colonial Presbyterianism Adopts Its Standards," JPH, XXXIV, p. 61.

³⁹ Trinterud, op. cit., p. 68.

⁴⁰ For adequate accounts Cf. Trinterud, op. cit., pp. 53-108; Gewehr, Wesley M., The Great Awakening in Virginia, 1740-1790, Durham, North Carolina, 1930; for source material: Armstrong, et. al., op. cit., pp. 33-53.

immediately became a leader in a "revival of religion" in that area. Frelinghuysen was pastor of the Dutch Reformed congregation in New Brunswick and had been quite successful in stirring the emotions of his people regarding their sinful and lost state. Tennent copied his procedures and added to his fervor Dickinson's concern for holiness of life. This put Tennent, to an extent, in opposition to the old line ministers who stressed right doctrine and order as the basis of the Church's faithfulness.

The revival movement gathered a number of the members of the Synod into its fold, most especially, of course, those men who were being trained at the Log College. In 1734 Tennent made a brilliant tactical move. Noting that the Westminster Directory called for the examination of a candidate as to the evidences of the grace of God in his life, along with his academic abilities, Tennent called upon the Synod to enforce this provision, since it had become part of the church's Standards through the Adopting Act. Unanimously the Synod called on the presbyteries to take "special care" that they do not admit into the ministry "loose, careless, and irreligious persons". The presbyteries were to "diligently examine all the candidates for the ministry in their experiences of a work of sanctifying grace in their hearts....."⁴¹ and to make regular inspection into the diligence and the "life and conversation" of their ministers. The Synod ordered that a copy of this act be inserted in each presbytery book and that it be read, in full, at each presbytery meeting.⁴²

It is significant and fortunate that part of this revival, which came to be known as the Great Awakening, took place within the context of the church. But it quite often did not take place within church order. In stressing the importance of vital religious experience and personal conversion the revivalist group, headed by the Tennents, inevitably began to doubt the 'Christianity' of those ministers who did not have nor seem to want to have a similar experience. Filled with an intense

⁴¹ Records, pp. 110-111.

⁴² Cf. Mss. minutes of the Presbytery of Philadelphia, 1733-1746 (hereafter in this chapter, Philadelphia), p. 3.

spirit of evangelism and a warm personal piety, their enthusiasm became contagious, to the extent that it began to take hold among some members of congregations whose pastors were not disposed to the methods of the revival. And so, to cite one example, the Presbytery of Donegal was notified by several of its ministers that Samuel Blair had been "intruding" into their parishes. ⁴³

This presented a crucial problem. The non-revivalists were put on the defensive, while the revival group became more and more offensive, in every sense of that word. Firmly believing that those who were not for them were opposed to the work of God, the revivalists began to itinerate throughout established churches, attracting a number of members away from their regular congregations and causing a great measure of dissension and conflict.

The problem was most acute in Pennsylvania, especially within the Presbytery of Donegal, both in congregations with settled ministers and in those that were vacant. In 1737 the matter was brought before the Synod. Here an act was passed, which began:

Inasmuch as God, who is a God of order, requires in an especial manner, that all the affairs of his kingdom on earth should be done decently and in order; and inasmuch as there may be frequent occasion in the course of Divine Providence, for the transportation or moving of ministers, or probationary preachers, from one Presbytery to another; for preventing many inconveniences that may ensue upon irregular steps that may be taken on such occasions, it is humbly proposed as a fit expedient:

First. That no probationer take upon him to preach in any vacant congregation without the order of the Presbytery under whose care he is. ⁴⁴

It was further stated that no minister or probationer was to be allowed to preach in any vacant church until approval was given by that congregation's presbytery. Finally, no minister was to invite any minister or probationer from another presbytery to preach in a vacant congregation "without the advice and concurrence of the brethren

⁴³ Donegal, p. 203.

⁴⁴ Records, pp. 134-135.

of his own Presbytery".

But the intrusions continued, and the following year, 1738, the Synod tightened its regulations in the matter. After much debate the following was presented for vote:

No minister belonging to this Synod shall have liberty to preach in any congregation belonging to another Presbytery whereof he is not a member, after he is advised by any minister of such Presbytery, that he thinks his preaching in that congregation will have a tendency to procure divisions and disorders, until he first obtain liberty from the Presbytery or Synod so to do. ⁴⁵

It passed, but not without dissenting votes. Yet it was because it was a motion stated in the negative, that some members of the Synod, certainly the revival group, misunderstood its intention and voted against it. Therefore, the matter was immediately reconsidered:

That in order to obviate some mistakes, that it is supposed some of the members of the Synod were in, with respect to the preceding overture, that it be voted that every minister belonging to this Synod, has liberty to preach in any vacant congregation where he shall be occasionally and providentially called, even though he is out of the bounds of the Presbytery to which he belongs, unless he be first advised by some minister of such Presbytery, that his preaching there is likely to procure divisions and disorders in such congregation; and even when he is so advised by any minister of such Presbytery, he may yet preach in such congregation, if by liberty first obtained from such Presbytery or from the Synod, but not otherwise. ⁴⁶

Under the circumstances this was a restrained and reasonable proposal; so reasonable, in fact, that when it was clarified and stated positively rather than negatively it was passed without a single dissenting vote. This is most significant, since all the leaders of the revival were present at this meeting: William Tennent, his sons, Gilbert, Charles, and William Jr., and John Cross and Samuel Blair. Also present was Jonathan Dickinson, who, if he did not agree with the revivalists in their methods, certainly supported the spirit of the revival.

⁴⁵ Ibid., p. 138.

⁴⁶ Ibid.

Trinterud feels that these acts represent the most fiendish move of all: "The clergy of the Scotch-Irish group were trying to take all power into their own hands." ⁴⁷ To pass these acts of 1737 and 1738, says Trinterud, "The opposition [anti-revivalists] remained under cover, working through control of the synod....". ⁴⁸ He goes on to make the remarkable claim that when a "request was made at a meeting of [a] presbytery" for a supply from another presbytery "any one minister could have the petition denied without stating his reasons". ⁴⁹ Whatever Trinterud's source of information for this statement, it is in direct opposition to the 1738 overture, passed unanimously by the Synod. Moreover, though the Synod in 1739, because of the continued intrusions, passed a further act allowing a minister to complain to his presbytery about an intrusion by a minister of another presbytery, ⁵⁰ it was repealed by the Synod in 1740. The act had left determination of the matter to the "offended" presbytery, with appeal to the Synod permitted. But even though it had been passed without dissent, the 1740 Synod declared that a number of people had misunderstood it and thought that it was "calculated to prevent itinerant preaching: the Synod do now declare, that they never thought of opposing, but do heartily rejoice in the labours of the ministry in other places besides their own particular charge....[and] they do now repeal that agreement, and do agree that our ministers shall, in that respect, conduct themselves as though it had never been". ⁵¹ Trinterud makes no mention of this action.

⁴⁷ Trinterud, op. cit., pp. 72-73.

⁴⁸ Ibid., p. 69.

⁴⁹ Ibid., p. 72.

⁵⁰ Records, pp. 146-147. Again present, and voting for the act, were all four Tennents, Samuel Blair, David Alexander, and Jonathan Dickinson. It is to be wondered why the Tennent group kept voting for these measures while continuing to break them.

⁵¹ Ibid., p. 154.

Obviously these synodical acts had been intended to curb the intrusions which were being committed by the revivalists, but there is no evidence to support the claim that the primary motive of the anti-revival ministers was "to eliminate the revival".⁵² It is much more to the point to say that the acts were designed to limit the revival; to contain it. The Old Side men were, at this initial stage at least, trying to preserve some form of order within the church as a whole. But many complex motives and reactions became tangled together during the period. The revivalists could carry on their revivals as long as they wanted, providing they did not try to force this method on those of a different kind. But a revival of this type was bound to spread, even if not encouraged by such tactics as intrusion. The revivalists could not but think that those who opposed them were graceless and Godless men (they soon made this belief explicit). Therefore, they came to believe they had a divine commission to fulfill in saving poor souls languishing under the ministry of unconverted pastors.

The ministers who opposed the revival were shocked at such claims and struggled hard to keep decency and order and to protect the rights of presbyteries to exercise control over who would preach within their bounds.⁵³ Thus the circle was complete. Who was to blame became a hollow and unprofitable question. But when the dust had settled it was to become clear to some, at least, that itinerating Presbyterian preachers have never been able to take the place of faithful pastors,⁵⁴ and that

⁵² Trinterud, op. cit., p. 68.

⁵³ Trinterud, Ibid., p. 73, supports Gilbert Tennent's claim that Christians who were under ministers who opposed the revival had every right to use an "extra-ordinary method" to call in outside ministers to preach.

⁵⁴ The reaction to the disruptive nature of the revival was so strong in Connecticut when it reached that colony that the civil General Assembly enacted a law which deprived any minister, who preached in another parish without permission, of his tax-supported stipend. If the offender was not a minister or licentiate he was to be fined £100; and if he was not a resident of Connecticut he was to be transported out of the colony. Cf. Hodge, op. cit., I, pp. 208-209 and Sprague, William, Annals of the American Pulpit, Vol. III, New York, 1860, p. 83.

That ministers should remain within their own area of responsibility and never intrude into another pastor's field is a principle that has always been held in the Reformed churches. Cf. Ainslie, James L., The Doctrines of Ministerial Order in the Reformed Churches of the 16th and 17th Centuries, Edinburgh, 1940, pp. 59-60.

there are several ways by which to revive a church.

The anti-revival party had been a majority in the Synod for several years and had shown restraint in not forcing high-handed or irreversible acts through the court. Whether or not they were fully justified in their evaluation of the revival is not at all the point in question. What is crucial is that, upon having the opportunity, they did not blindly proceed to push through whatever measures might serve to rid the church of the revivalist ministers. They had not, in Trinterud's words, "made the utmost use of the opportunity granted them in having a majority present at the sessions".⁵⁵ In addition to what we have seen already, it is interesting to remember how a Synod controlled by 'anti-revivalists' dealt with their greatest 'enemy' when given the chance. We noted earlier (Cf. Supra, p. 93) the decisive rebuke given by the Synod in 1737 to a group from William Tennent's congregation who wanted to be rid of him. The anti-revivalists had every opportunity to remove Tennent. Yet the Synod ordered the people to "lay aside such groundless dissatisfactions".⁵⁶ The framer of this overture, unanimously adopted by the Synod, was John Thomson, one of the most influential leaders of opposition to the revival and the man who was to become its most erudite opponent.

3. Examination of candidates

Another question of Church order drew the Synod's attention. There was great concern among a majority of members, who believed that some means should be used by the church as a whole to compensate for the fact that several of the ministers (the Log College 'graduates') entering the Synod had no university degree. Therefore, the Synod passed a regulation which caused the greatest ill feeling among the revivalist ministers and deepened the gulf in the church between those who would not sacrifice

⁵⁵ Trinterud, op. cit., p. 75.

⁵⁶ Records, p. 133.

a thoroughly-educated ministry and those who insisted on evidences of a personal experience of the grace of God in a minister's heart.

The Presbytery of Lewes presented to the Synod in 1738 an overture which was passed by a great majority.⁵⁷ It called for the annual appointment by the Synod of a committee, made up of those "whom they know to be well skilled in the several branches of philosophy, and divinity, and the languages", to examine any students who had not graduated from a recognized university in New England or Europe before they were to be taken under trials for the ministry by any presbytery.

This "reasonable" ⁵⁸ provision was designed to provide a synodical certificate for such candidates, "till better provision be made". In this way it "will in some measure answer the design of taking a degree in the college".⁵⁹ Trinterud comments that "no mention is made of William Tennent, Sr., and his excellent work, nor was he given a place on the committee of examiners for his area. The supposition of the overture was that locally trained men were coming into the synod who were not properly qualified".⁶⁰

These comments are at best misleading. The Synod established two committees in relation to the overture, one to the south of Philadelphia, the other to the north. To say that William Tennent was given no place on the committee for his area

⁵⁷ Ibid., pp. 141-142. Apparently the only ministers voting against the measure were the four Tennents, Samuel Blair, and Eleazer Wales, who became a member of the Presbytery of New Brunswick. Dickinson, who was present, voted with the "great majority".

⁵⁸ Armstrong, et. al., op. cit., p. 35.

⁵⁹ Records, p. 141.

⁶⁰ Trinterud, op. cit., p. 74. George Ingram, a stated clerk of the Presbytery of New Brunswick during the first years of the twentieth-century, was one of the great defenders and enthusiasts of the work of the Tennents, the Great Revival and the original Presbytery of New Brunswick. Yet Ingram was forced to refer to the Log College graduates as a "little band of halftrained men". Ingram, George, "The Erection of the Presbytery of New Brunswick," etc., JPH, VII, 174.

leaves the impression that the 'Old Side' men were thereby, in Trinterud's words, attempting "to root out the Tennent group entirely".⁶¹ The fact is that the committee "to the northward" of Philadelphia, the area in which the Log College was located and where the revivalists were centered, was composed of seven ministers, four of whom soon would be members of the New Side Synod.⁶² One of them was Gilbert Tennent, the leader of the revival.

Moreover, it was approved that all candidates who had not been licensed, even if they had graduated from a recognized university or college, were to "undergo the same trials". This requirement was all in keeping with the Ulster Scot experience. The General Synod of Ulster was really a 'frontier' synod, faced with many of the same problems that were being confronted in America. This 'practical experience', therefore, was implemented in the colonies. Ulster Scots either had to go to Scotland for a university education or attend one of the 'academies' which were organized in their own country; occasionally there was 'home training', which formed the pattern for Tennent's school. But all these candidates were required to pass the same educational examinations as those who graduated from a Scottish University.⁶³ The American Synod was trying to follow that good pattern and require the same proficiency for all its ministers.

But the die was cast. At this same meeting a number of the revivalist group within the Presbyteries of New York and Philadelphia asked to be formed into a new presbytery. This was approved by the Synod, a rather strange action if the anti-revival men were so anxious to suppress utterly the Tennent group. The new

⁶¹ Ibid.

⁶² The four 'New Side' men were Tennent, Dickinson, Pemberton, and Pierson. The three members of the committee who, in three years, would stand on the 'Old Side', were Andrews, Cowell, and Robert Cross. Only the latter was aggressively Old Side.

⁶³ Cf. Armstrong, Maurice W., "English, Scottish, and Irish Background of American Presbyterianism", etc., JPH, XXXIV, pp. 14-15.

judicatory was designated the Presbytery of New Brunswick and was comprised Gilbert Tennent and his brother, William, Jr., and Blair, Wales, and John Cross. Cross, later to become a disgrace to the revival party, was a Scot. It was becoming clear that this struggle, in contrast to the subscription controversy, which had its sides rather neatly defined between Old World and New, was not influenced by 'ethnic' considerations.

The new presbytery met two-and-a-half months after the 1738 meeting of Synod. John Rowland, a 'graduate' of the Log College, asked to be received as a candidate and in so doing became the cause célèbre of the struggle over synodical examination. The

Presby. thereon entered upon a serious Consideration of the Act of last Synod appointing that Young men be first examined by a Commission [i.e. committee] of Synod and Obtain a Testimony of yr approbation before they can be taken upon Tryal by any Presby. belonging to the same, and after much reasoning upon the Case

it was decided that the Presbytery of New Brunswick would not be bound by this regulation.⁶⁴ Rowland was assigned parts of trial for ordination and later in 1738 was licensed.

When the presbytery-books were examined at the Synod's meeting in the spring of 1739, New Brunswick's irregularity was immediately noted:

the Presbytery of New-Brunswick have admitted to trials and licensed Mr. John Rowland to preach the gospel without his submitting to such preparatory examination as was appointed; the Synod do therefore judge the proceedings of the said Presbytery of New-Brunswick to be very disorderly, and do admonish the said Presbytery to avoid such divisive courses for the future; and do determine not to admit the said Mr. Rowland to be a preacher of the gospel within our bounds, nor encourage any of our people to accept him until he submit to such examinations as were appointed by this Synod for those that have had a private education.⁶⁵

The Synod also received a complaint from some members of the Hopewell and Maiden-

⁶⁴ Minutes of the Presbytery of New Brunswick, Vol. I. (hereafter in this chapter, New Brunswick); printed in JPH, XXIV, pp. 138-139.

⁶⁵ Records, p. 148.

head congregations. These people were under the jurisdiction of the Presbytery of Philadelphia, but, upon Rowland's licensure, had petitioned the Presbytery of New Brunswick to have him preach as a supply. The Presbytery of Philadelphia, learning of this, refused to allow Rowland to minister within its bounds. Those of Hopewell and Maidenhead who wanted Rowland asked the Presbytery of Philadelphia to form them into a separate congregation. The presbytery approved this only on the condition that they would not build a new meeting house without coming to an agreement with the main body of the congregation regarding its location.

With this arrangement the new church was set off, whereupon it immediately asked to be dismissed to the much more congenial care of the Presbytery of New Brunswick. Philadelphia insisted that first they comply with the condition to which they had agreed.⁶⁶ The new congregation appealed to the Synod in 1739, which judged that these people "have behaved with great indecency towards their Presbytery". They have cast "unjust aspersions" both on the Synod and the Presbytery of Philadelphia, and they "have acted very disorderly in improving Mr. Rowland as a preacher among them, when they were advised by the Presbytery that he was not to be esteemed and improved as an orderly candidate of the ministry". The Synod, therefore, "do wholly disallow the said complainants being erected into a new congregation until they do first submit the determination of the place for erecting a new meeting-house to their Presbytery".⁶⁷ But the group simply bided its time and at the schism went into the Presbytery of New Brunswick.

This meeting of Synod received objections to the previous year's act and attempted to make the regulations acceptable by saying that candidates could be examined before the entire Synod or its Commission.⁶⁸ But this met with no success, and on October

⁶⁶ Cf. Ingram, op. cit., VI, p. 338.

⁶⁷ Records, op. cit.

⁶⁸ Ibid., p. 146.

11, Rowland was ordained by the Presbytery of New Brunswick;⁶⁹ so also, at a meeting the following month, the presbytery licensed James McCrea, another 'graduate' of the Log College who had not been examined by the Synod.⁷⁰ Again, just a day before the opening of the Synod in May of 1740 the presbytery licensed William Robinson.⁷¹ They then reported to the Synod that their minute book was "forgot".⁷² Three months later Samuel Finley, who also had been educated at the Log College, was taken under the care of the Presbytery of New Brunswick as a candidate for the ministry and the following day was licensed to preach.⁷³

Showing a definite attempt to avoid schism, the 1740 meeting of the Synod reviewed the 1738 act regarding examination, stating that the Synod did not "thereby call in question the power of subordinate Presbyteries to ordain ministers, but only assert their own right to judge of the qualifications of their own members".⁷⁴ Furthermore, the Synod stated explicitly that men who came into the ministry contrary to the synodical agreement certainly could be considered true ministers of the Gospel. But a basic, church-wide, agreement on the qualifications of ministers was necessary "to the well-being of this part of the Church of Christ". Such men, "until they submit to the said agreement....[will] be in all other respects...considered as

⁶⁹ New Brunswick; JPH, VI, p. 346.

⁷⁰ Ibid.

⁷¹ Ibid., JPH, VII, p. 144.

⁷² Records, p. 150. The Synod, dominated by the non-revival men during the last years before the schism, showed no attempt at partiality in assigning men to revise the minutes of the presbyteries. Of the revivalist group John Cross and David Alexander served as revisers of non-revivalist-presbytery books once, Blair twice, and William Tennent, Jr. four times in the years 1736-1741.

⁷³ New Brunswick, op. cit., p. 146.

⁷⁴ Records, p. 154.

ministers of the gospel".⁷⁵ There the matter stood until the 1741 meeting.

4. Tennent's sermon

It is evident that by 1740 the several principles on which members of the Synod differed had become blurred. The role which the controversy over subscription played in the pending schism certainly is not completely clear. The entire Synod had become reconciled to the concept, at least in varying degrees. The 1730's had seen great concern from some quarters about the possible infiltration of the church by theologically-corrupt British ministers. When, at the same time, the revival began to rush forward, some of the more rigid subscriptionists had feared that doctrinal laxity would come in its wake. But, as it developed, the revivalists did not reject the Westminster Symbols and, in fact, continued to require subscription.⁷⁶

The anti-revivalists could not understand the purposes and methods of the revival faction and reacted by attempting to limit lawfully the intrusions which seemed to (and did) call into question the validity of their settled ministries. The attempt of the church as a whole to set educational requirements for its ministers was just and reasonable and was a natural reaction to the great changes taking place; here was the same fear which spurred-on subscription, that theologically-unsound men would infest the church.

But there had been a surprising degree of forbearance, at least on the surface, up until 1740. Certainly the revivalists were presenting a threat, seen especially in intrusion and in the licensing of privately educated men; but an impartial reading of the minutes of the Synod through 1740 will show that though several acts were aimed at curbing the threat, they were not enacted blindly or rigidly. The anti-revival party could have pushed much more through the Synod than it did.

⁷⁵ Ibid.

⁷⁶ When Rowland was ordained by the Presbytery of New Brunswick he "adopted the Westminster Confession of Faith". New Brunswick; JPH, VI, p. 345. Indeed, after the schism the New Side was intent to demonstrate its 'orthodoxy' and maintained the practice of subscription. This is analogous to the practice of the Free Church of Scotland, following the Disruption in 1843.

The one thing which would ignite these smouldering principles of contention would be to mix them directly with personalities. Gilbert Tennent did just that, and the situation burst into flames. Naturally, Tennent was frustrated by the attempts to contain the revival. He believed passionately in what he was doing. The more he believed in it the more he came to believe that those who were against the revival were against God. With the arrival of George Whitefield from England in November of 1739 the movement took on new life and spurred Tennent on all the more. ⁷⁷

Tennent chose a most unfortunate course of action. The congregation at Nottingham was under the jurisdiction of the Presbytery of Donegal, but was located near Samuel Blair's church in the Presbytery of New Castle. In the latter part of 1739 Blair had accepted the call to this congregation at Fagg's Manor and soon was intruding into the Nottingham church, which became vacant sometime in mid-1739. Seeing an opportunity of extending the revival, he arranged for Tennent to 'intrude' also. Here on March 8, 1740 Gilbert Tennent preached his famous "Nottingham Sermon". Trinterud attempts some justification of the action by saying that Nottingham "had long been vacant". ⁷⁸ This is a puzzling statement, since the church's pastor, John Paul, had died only months earlier. ⁷⁹

⁷⁷ Whitefield wrote to a friend in London: "God has now brought me to New-Brunswick, where I am blessed with the Conversation of Mr. Gilbert Tennant....Indeed he is a good Soldier of Jesus Christ, and God is pleased in a wonderful Manner to own both him and his Brethren....The Congregation where they have preached have been surprisingly convicted and melted down". "A Letter From the Reverend Mr. George Whitefield to a Friend in London, dated at New-Brunswick in New-Jersey, April 27, 1740," London, 1741, p. 7.

For an interesting exchange between a group of Presbyterian laymen in the Presbytery of New Castle and Whitefield, Cf. The Humble Address of Several Persons of the Presbyterian Persuasion, etc., London, 1741; and Whitefield, George, "A Letter from the Rev. Mr. Whitefield, to some Church-Members of the Presbyterian Perswasion," etc., London, 1741. Whitefield stresses his Calvinism and his objections to some points in Wesley's theology.

⁷⁸ Trinterud, op. cit., p. 88.

⁷⁹ Cf. Webster, Richard, A History of the Presbyterian Church in America, etc., Philadelphia, 1857, p. 438.

The sermon was entitled "The Danger of an Unconverted Ministry"⁸⁰ and was published by Benjamin Franklin later in 1740. Archibald Alexander, certainly no enemy of the revival or of Tennent, called it "one of the most severely abusive sermons that was ever penned".⁸⁰ It is not difficult to see why, for Tennent rules the opponents of the revival out of the Kingdom. He begins:

As a faithful Ministry is a great Ornament, Blessing, and Comfort, to the Church of God; even the Feet of such Messengers are beautiful: So on the contrary, an ungodly Ministry is a great Curse and Judgment: These Caterpillars labour to devour every green Thing.

The "Pharisee-Teachers" have no experience of the grace of God in their lives; therefore, they "carelessly offer a common Mess to their People, and leave it to them, to divide, it among themselves, as they see fit". But soon "pious People begin to suspect their Hypocrisie, for which they have good Reason".

How is it possible for a Christian to put up with such ministers? Only by sleeping can he "bear with those dead Dogs, that can't bark.....But let such hireling murderous Hypocrites take Care, that they don't feel the Force of a Halter in this World, and an aggravated Damnation in the next". Such ministers have none of the spirit of the Lord they preach, for they are "as blind as Moles". Congregations become so stupefied under such a minister, that

If they can get one, that has the Name of a Minister, with a Band, and a Black Coat or Gown to carry on a Sabbath-days among them, although ever so coldly, and unsuccessfully; if he is free from gross Crimes in Practice, and takes good care to keep at a due Distance from their Consciences, and is never troubled about his Insuccessfulness; O! think the poor Fools, that is a fine Man indeed; our Minister is a prudent charitable Man, he is not always harping about Terror, and Sounding Damnation in our Ears, like some rash-headed Preachers who by their uncharitable Methods, are ready to put poor People out of their Wits, or to run them into Despair; O! how terrible a Thing is that Despair! Ay, our Minister, honest Man, gives us good Caution against it. Poor silly Souls!

At this point Tennent begins to rationalize his position, saying that if things are as they have been "represented" then it is "lawful" and good for people suffering under "a pious Minister of lesser Gifts" to go to hear "Godly Persons". "To bind

⁸⁰ Quoted in Sprague, op. cit., p. 37.

Men to a particular Minister...when they are more edified elsewhere, is....a Compelling of Men to Sin....an unscriptural Infringement on Christian Liberty.....I see not, why we should be under a fatal Necessity of hearing him, I mean our Parish-Minister, perpetually, or generally....Faith is said to come by Hearing, Rom.10. But the Apostle doesn't add, Your Parish-Minister." ⁸¹

This sermon was the immediate cause of the schism. The more limited one's vision, the more nearly total can be one's solution; Tennent had proved this well. If the Old Side men could not understand the revivalist position, outbursts such as this sermon show how utterly incapable the revival group was of understanding the reasons that the anti-revivalists put such great importance on an orderly ministry. Those who opposed the revival feared that men's hearts (emotions) would gain ascendancy over their heads. While this usually did not develop to the extremes of the nineteenth-century revivals, it happened often enough to make the anti-revivalists' warnings quite valid. ⁸² Trinterud definitely attempts to leave the impression that the excesses of emotionalism played an almost unnoticeable part in the Great Awakening. ⁸³ But physical demonstrations, such as weeping, shouting,

⁸¹ Tennent, Gilbert, The Danger of An Unconverted Ministry, Philadelphia, 1740; printed in Armstrong, et. al., op. cit., pp. 40-44.

⁸² Great shows of emotion, bitter and ungrounded charges against "unconverted" ministers, book-burning, and other tragic events were brought on by one James Davenport. Davenport's name became symbolic for the lunacy of strict private judgment, individuals claiming direct inspiration from God, and the excesses to which any 'emotional' revival is bound to lead. Davenport, at the time, was undoubtedly non compos mentis, but later completely retracted the position he had taken during the revival, just as Gilbert Tennent confessed his own excesses. Certainly Davenport went farther than any of the other revivalists in his mad actions, but Webster, op. cit., p. 532, a good friend of the revival, makes a telling comment. In attempting to defend Davenport, Webster asks why Davenport must bear the full brunt of accusations against the revival, when he did not differ from the Tennents and Whitefield "in the spirit, principle, and matter of his teachings and actings". For Webster's full article on Davenport, Cf. op. cit., pp. 531-545. For a less favorable, yet more objective, view of Davenport, Cf. Sprague, op. cit., pp. 80-92.

⁸³ Cf. Trinterud, op. cit., pp. 76-77.

and fainting, were not uncommon, as Dickinson noted.⁸⁴ Indeed, Samuel Blair felt the need of defending such outbursts, using an interesting theological rationalization. He said that such physical demonstrations quite often "have been the effects of the rational, spiritual, strong exercises of the soul, from the laws of the union between the soul and the body".⁸⁵

Tennent's sermon spelled doom to any hope of holding the Synod together; not only was it published and republished but it became his 'stock' sermon, and he preached it time and again as he itinerated from one congregation to another. It might be expected that the anti-revival ministers, who were the "unconverted" in Tennent's judgement, would react quickly and bitterly. They did. It was in these circumstances that the Synod met in Philadelphia on May 27, 1741. There was little doubt as to what would happen.

B. Polity and the schism

1. Thomson's overture

A month before the meeting of the Synod John Thomson and his session at Chestnut Level presented an overture to the Presbytery of Donegal. The purpose was "to move the Pby to interpose their authority to hinder both mins. & people within our bounds from encouraging disorderly mins. & preachers from intruding irregularly into our Congr. and from going to hear them".⁸⁶ The overture was approved.⁸⁷

There are four specific points. First, since the presbytery has been "invested with authority from him [Christ] to ma[i]ntain ye order, discipline, and Govnt of

⁸⁴ Nichols, Robert Hastings, Presbyterianism in New York State, Philadelphia, 1963, pp. 41-42.

⁸⁵ Blair, Samuel, Works, Philadelphia, 1754, p. 288; quoted in Hodge, op. cit., II, p. 183n.

⁸⁶ Donegal, p. 216.

⁸⁷ For the entire overture, Cf. Donegal, pp. 216-222.

his Ch[urch], [it should] bear testimony ag[ains]t these disorders in a judicial way-- by making Some Pby. order". Second, perhaps it would be a good thing to require all church members to subscribe the Westminster Symbols as the confession of their faith "and also to promise to Submit to ye Govnt. of the presbyterian Chh. as laid down in our Westmst Directory". Third, all members admitted to the ordinances of the Church should promise not to go to hear "disorderly" ministers, "especially those who are under any prohibition by act of Synod or Pby.". Finally, the members of the presbytery are not to allow such ministers to preach in their congregations. ⁸⁸

The overture states that the reason for all this concern is the breaking down of Church order. Certainly the 'success' of the revivalists was one of the things which was preying on the minds of the Old Side men, but it is difficult to imagine that it was really the only motive and that all other considerations, including the question of Church polity, were merely 'cover-ups' for their basic jealousy and hatred of the Tennent group. Indeed, this overture shows no invective against the revivalists, who were railing so harshly against the Old Side. It goes so far as to confess that it is undoubtedly because of their own sins that God has left the anti-revival group fall into the problems and divisions that surrounded them and appeals to the presbytery to "examine ourselves wherein we have everyone by our own particular misconduct contributed to the [producing?] of this dreadful plague". ⁸⁹

The revivalists have taken "upon them in a very daring and presumptuous manner, to pass Sentence on their Breth[re]n, as it were by wholeSale, without distinction, as carnal, graceless unconverted Minrs.", ⁹⁰ but we must reject the notion that all who follow such "disorderly" preachers are evil or graceless. ⁹¹ It cannot be

⁸⁸ Ibid., p. 218.

⁸⁹ Ibid.

⁹⁰ Ibid., p. 217.

⁹¹ Ibid., p. 220.

denied, continued the overture, that some people may have received good from the preaching of disorderly men, for "God both can & doth bless it & make it effectual when & to whom he pleaseth" even though "there may be many irregularities in ye manner of doing it".⁹² Further, we are not so rash as to condemn the revivalists as "deceivers & hypocrities". We can certainly believe that they are sincere and do what they do from the intention of serving God. It might, therefore, be argued that it would be wrong to attempt to hinder people from hearing them. But

A person may be a deceiver & deceive others & yet be no hypocrite viz. if he be deceived himself. Ye Apostle Paul was as Sincere as they can be w[he]n he persecuted ye Ch[urch] of Xt....

Sincerity & a good intention will never Justify an evil conduct or action. Is it not an encouragement to promoters & [forbearance?] of errors to indulge them to propogate their errors because we believe them to be sincere? ⁹³

2. Cross' "protestation"

There were twenty-six ministers and eighteen ruling elders present at the 1741 meeting of Synod. Not a single member of the Presbytery of New York attended. There was, therefore, no group to mediate between the Tennent revivalists and the anti-revival men, and nothing could avert a show-down. Not only was Tennent's terrible sermon fresh in the minds of all present, but also Alexander Creaghead was present. Members of the Presbytery of Donegal sought for his exclusion from the court, since he had been suspended by Donegal following his incredible display five months earlier (Cf. Supra, pp.125-6). The Synod heard the case at length,⁹⁴ but there was no opportunity for a determination.

Four days after the first session Robert Cross presented a lengthy "Protestation" to the Synod.⁹⁵ It contained demands of the Tennent party and listed the reasons

⁹² Ibid., p. 221.

⁹³ Ibid., pp. 221-222.

⁹⁴ Cf. Records, pp. 156, 157.

⁹⁵ For the text of the protestation, Cf. Records, pp. 157n-160n. It is also printed in Hodge, op. cit., pp. 147-155.

for demanding. It called for adherence to the Westminster Symbols according to the acts of the Synod in 1729 and 1736; in other words, the cessation of intrusion by the Tennent group. If they would not subject themselves to the authority of the majority of the Synod and conform to the Constitution, the revivalists should not be considered members of the Synod.⁹⁶ For the Synod to remain in communion with the revivalists "is most absurd and inconsistent".⁹⁷

Some of the wording (e.g., "They openly condemn us wholesale") shows Thomson's influence in drawing up the protest. It closed by admitting that the Old Side men must certainly bear some of the responsibility "for the great decay of the life and power of godliness among all ranks, both ministers and people". Yet the protesters were convinced that it was their duty "to bear testimony against these prevailing disorders, judging that to give way to the breaking down the hedge of discipline and government from about Christ's vineyard, is far from being the proper method of causing his tender plants to grow in grace and fruitfulness".⁹⁸

Such points were well taken, but the action, in effect, rode the Tennent group out of the Synod. It was a blundering, desperate move, made in the heat of reaction to the wild accusations of the Log College men. But it was not justifiable. When Cross had finished reading the protestation he laid it on the clerk's desk, a number

⁹⁶ Records, p. 159n.

⁹⁷ Ibid.

⁹⁸ Ibid., p. 160n.

of ministers rushed forward to sign it,⁹⁹ the Tennent group¹⁰⁰ tried to be heard, and for several minutes confusion reigned.

Hodge comments that the protestation

was unconstitutional. It was, moreover, inoperative as to the evils it was intended to repress. The invectives under which the authors of the protest had suffered, were only rendered the more severe; and their churches were more than ever open to the intrusion of their rejected brethren. After the schism, those brethren seem to have thrown off all restraint as to that point, and to have established separate congregations wherever the opportunity was afforded. The situation of the protesters was, therefore, in no respect improved by the course which they pursued; on the contrary, it was worse than before. They now suffered the manifold inconveniences of having placed themselves in the wrong.¹⁰¹

3. Thomson vs. Tennent

As the Synod closed on June 2, the day following the protestation, John Thomson was appointed chairman of a committee to "defend the protestation in print if need be".¹⁰² This was a significant appointment, for as a result of it we are enabled to draw some comparisons of the stands taken by the two Sides on the authority of higher judicatories in the Church.

While the matter of the revival, per se, appears to be the crux of the division

⁹⁹ Twelve ministers signed: Robert Cross, John Thomson, Francis Alison, Robert Cathcart, Richard Zanchy, John Elder, John Craig, Samuel Caven, Samuel Thomson, Adam Boyd, James Martin, and Robert Jamison. In addition there were eight ruling elders who signed.

¹⁰⁰ Those revivalist members of the Synod present were the four Tennents, Treat, Samuel Blair, Alexander Craghead, David Alexander, and Eleazer Wales.

Five ministers present did not sign, but were not members of the Tennent group: Gillespie, Hutcheson, Andrews, Elmer, McHenry. Ten ruling elders did not sign the protestation. It is evident from the proceedings that the elders had as full a voice in the matter as did the ministers. In determining that the "protesters" were in the majority the elders' votes were counted along with the ministers'.

Whether Elmer left early, before the protestation was presented, as Webster, op. cit., p. 403, suggests, or if he only later decided to adhere to the Old Side is not known. But it is interesting to note that Elmer, who had been the one minister to delay his subscription at the time of the Adopting Act in 1729, aligned himself with the Old Side. This shows that the question of the revival cut across former considerations.

¹⁰¹ Hodge, op. cit., p. 160.

¹⁰² Records, p. 161.

and those events which moved swiftly toward it, the question of the authority of Church courts provided the field for battle. In June of 1740 the Presbytery of Donegal had directed Thomson to collect from Andrews, the Synod's clerk, copies of the minutes of the 1740 Synod, charges against 'unconverted' ministers which had been presented at that Synod by Tennent and Blair, and a copy of Tennent's Apology. The purpose was "to make Some animadversions on those papers, & Sd Apol[og]y to vindicate our characters, & give ye world a Just representation of ye thing charged on us in Sd papers". ¹⁰³

The Apology originally had been drawn up by Gilbert and William Tennent, Samuel Blair, and Eleazor Wales in 1739 and finally was printed, by Franklin, in 1741. In it the revivalists object to the principle of prohibiting ministers to preach in other presbyteries unless they are invited. "That an approved Minister's stated Preaching in one Presbytery should be safe, and his occasional in another, should be dangerous, is a Riddle to us which we profess we cannot see through". ¹⁰⁴ The New Brunswick men register surprise at this regulation, thinking, "that when Ministers were ordained, they had a Right to preach Christ where they were providentially called whether it was within their Presbytery-Line, or beyond it". ¹⁰⁵

Second, they challenge the act regarding the synodical examination of candidates for the ministry. It only makes logical sense, says the Tennent group, that if a presbytery is going to have the right to ordain ministers it must have the right to judge of their qualifications for the Office and to conduct their own examinations. ¹⁰⁶

¹⁰³ Donegal, p. 194.

¹⁰⁴ [Presbytery of New Brunswick], The Apology of the Presbytery of New-Brunswick, etc., Philadelphia, 1741, p. 42.

¹⁰⁵ Ibid., p. 46.

¹⁰⁶ Ibid., p. 48.

And so if some "godly Candidate, who is sufficiently qualified", were to present himself to them for ordination, but who at the same time should "scruple" against the Synod's examination, they would be "obliged by the Law of Christ to receive him". 107

Moving into the general area of judicatorial rights the Apology states that "Particular Presbyteries....have full and complete Power for ordering all the affairs of the Church within their Bounds". 108 In other words, they say, the full power of Presbyterian polity lies in the presbytery, with a synod or larger assembly having only the right to correct and to advise. If the Synod can take to itself the power it has claimed (limiting intrusions and requiring examinations for candidates) then it can usurp all the powers of a presbytery. This

seems to us to be a great Step to Prelacy: For what are the Members of the Committee [on examinations]....but a Combination or Convocation of Superintendents and Deputy-Prelates, to whose lordly Authority the inferior Clergy, the poor Curates, I mean the Presbyteries, are obliged to submit. 109

We are "in a poor Box indeed" if the majority of "Church Rulers" can decide upon these things for us by passing laws and regulations, "armed with Penalties against those that conscientiously dissent". 110 And in a revealing sentence it is stated: "Every new religious Law cuts off a valuable Branch from our Christian Liberty". 111 Then the Apology makes it clear that the authority committed to presbyteries is not exactly an authority. The presbyteries have the right to decide and agree upon matters, provided that they do not encroach upon the liberties of Christians under their care. Presbyteries cannot pretend to bind any dissenting members to observe

107 Ibid., p. 49.

108 Ibid., p. 50.

109 Ibid., pp. 51-52.

110 Ibid., pp. 56-57.

111 Ibid., p. 57.

their decisions. ¹¹²

The tone of the Apology is drastically different from Tennent's "Unconverted" sermon the following year. Indeed, the Apology states explicitly that the New Brunswick men are not protesting against the anti-revival men as persons, but only on principle. ¹¹³ It is clear again that it was only within the previous year, prior to the 1741 meeting of Synod, that the fire of passion flared out of control, mainly because of Tennent's sermon.

In 1741 John Thomson published The Government of the Church of Christ as a result of his compilation of materials as he had been directed by the Presbytery of Donegal and as a defense of the protestation as he had been directed by the Synod. This was the most scholarly work produced in relation to the schism, but that did not mean that it was free from bias. Yet Thomson presented a logical and careful explication of the Old Side position regarding the rights and duties of the higher courts of the Church.

To do this he quotes extensively from several papers which have been printed by the revival group, and most especially from the Apology. The Church, he says, "is invested with Authority to govern her own Members, and [to] oblige them to obedience". ¹¹⁴ It is nonsense to say that the majority cannot compel the minority; "Certainly the Majority must carry the Point....or else why did they vote at all?" ¹¹⁵

If the Presbytery of New Brunswick is correct, that presbyteries have no right to bind those who have differing sentiments on some matter, then in a split vote of a presbytery the minority either must accept the decision of the majority

¹¹² Ibid., p. 64.

¹¹³ Ibid., p. 42.

¹¹⁴ Thomson, John, The Government of the Church of Christ, Philadelphia, 1741, p. 57.

¹¹⁵ Ibid., pp. 71-72.

or they have a Right to reject it if they please, and so there is no Authority but only Advice....For it seems the People ruled are the ultimate Judges of their own Liberties, tho' ruled by their own Representatives; and so far[e]well all Government in the Church; the Presbytery may give their best Advice, and so might as many Magistrates or Mechanics, but are invested with no Authority to rule, nor is their Judgment of any Authority further than its apparent Reasonableness persuades the Parties concerned; which is most evidently absurd, contrary to the Word, to Reason, to the Nature of Government in general, and the Presbyterian Government in particular. 116

Thomson argues that the word "presbytery" can apply equally to any judicatory of the Church, from a session to an ecumenical council. "The word properly signifies a Convention of Elders or Presbyters sitting in Judicatory". 117 The Log College men argued that there is a parity of ministers, that a presbytery of the smallest number of ministers has power from Christ to ordain, and that presbyteries therefore have the right to examine those whom they ordain. Thomson agrees with the first premise, but says that the second is wrong if those who meet as a presbytery do not meet "according to the Order or appointment of the Judicatories to which they belong, but perhaps contrary to it". If this is the case, says Thomson, "I take [it] to be no Presbytery, and consequently [to have] no Power to act judicially in any thing". The third proposition is "just and sound, if rightly understood and limited" (in other words, in the context of Thomson's response to the second point). 118

As Thomson sees it, "The plain and genuine Design of....[the] Apology, is to overthrow all Authority, and cast all Order and Government out of the Church". 119

116 Ibid., p. 55.

117 Ibid., p. 60.

118 Ibid., p. 53. Torrance, T.F., Conflict and Agreement In The Church, Vol. II, London, 1960, p. 54, says: "Ordination is not properly and validly enacted by any association of presbyters, but by an association of presbyters duly convened within and according to the discipline and constitution of the Church by a resolution of the appropriate court as a whole; for it must be an act in which the whole Church concurs and which therefore has the acknowledged authority of the Church."

119 Ibid., pp. 56-57.

Thomson spends nearly the whole of the first half of his book refuting charges that the Old Side ministers are unconverted. As he comes to the close of his work he appeals for a revival of discipline within congregations, saying that this would promote and revive a work of Grace. After all, "Is not the Discipline of the Church an appointed Mean, both of Conversion and Edification?" ¹²⁰

The New Brunswick argument as contained in the Apology was that a minister should be able to go to preach wherever he is "providentially" called. "Providentially" is the key word. One of Tennent's tenets was that the "Call of God is to be gather'd from the sincere and ardent desires of serving him in the Ministry of the Gospel, which he puts in the Hearts of those he Calls.....and his opening, in the Course of his Providence, a Door of entrance into the Office agreeable to the Order of his Church." ¹²¹ Much hinged on that door and upon the question of who had the authority to open it. To the Old Side men, for a man to be "providentially" called meant, of course, that he had an 'inner' call, in accordance with what is described in the Westminster Standards, but that beyond that the Church itself had the duty to open and shut the door of ordination and that, to a real degree, this constituted part of the "providential call".

Yet the Old Side men went too far in leaving the impression that they believed that in certain things the courts of the Church could not err. ¹²² It was charged against them that they had made and desired to make rules and acts which were "contrary to, or forbidden in, any place of scripture". The New Side were certain that the Old Side believed "That church-judicatures have a lawful power of oppressing the consciences of their members". Therefore, they said, the Old Side was

¹²⁰ Ibid., p. 126.

¹²¹ Finley, Samuel, The Approved Minister of God, etc., Philadelphia, [1749], p. 5n.; quoted in Trinterud, op. cit., p. 90.

¹²² Cf. Thomson, op. cit., p. 97; and Trinterud, op. cit., pp. 91-92.

exercising "legislative power", a thing which, though never clearly defined, had been rejected by the Synod at the time of the Adopting Act in 1729. ¹²³

In speaking of the power of church judicatories Thomson had denied expressly any "legislative power", ¹²⁴ by which he meant that the courts of the Church should not pass rules which were not agreeable to the Word of God. He said that the Old Side men rejected such legislative power, but claimed for the Church "only a ministerial executive Power, viz. a Power or Authority as Officers in Christ's Church to govern it according to the Laws which he hath already given, and consequently to explain and apply these Laws to their proper Cases". ¹²⁵ Here Thomson tried to skirt the issue, which was that in the end the majority always must decide what is and what is not agreeable to the Word of God. Thomson failed to show any real difference between 'legislative' and 'governing' power in Church courts.

It is quite clear from what we have seen that the New Brunswick men were little concerned with any judicatories. Trinterud attempts to build the case that the basic authority of a presbytery as over against a synod was a matter of deep principle to the revivalists, and that they were remaining faithful to this concept in the face of great hardships and conflicts. ¹²⁶ But if the Old Side men can be accused of attempting to exercise political control of the Church to stamp out the revival, to a greater degree it is true that the New Side faction used the argument regarding polity to work for the one thing that obsessed them as the prime need: conversion experience. They spoke much in their writings about the rights of a "presbytery"

¹²³ Blair, Samuel, Vindication of the Brethren who were unjustly...cast out of the Synod, etc., in Blair's Works, Philadelphia, 1754, p. 213; quoted in Briggs, op. cit., pp. 266-267.

¹²⁴ Cf. Thomson, op. cit., pp. 66ff., 84ff.

¹²⁵ Ibid., p. 97.

¹²⁶ Trinterud, op. cit., pp. 81-82, 98. Cf. also Alexander, op. cit., pp. 50-51.

as opposed to the rights of a "synod", but when they went further it became evident that they believed in no corporate authority to regulate the life of the Church. If the situation had so presented itself the Log College men easily would have argued for the right of a local congregation over against its presbytery. To the revivalists it was not a matter of spelling-out passionately-held principles of Church government, but only one of removing any ecclesiastical power (in this case the Synod) which hindered them in their aims.

On the other hand, while the Old Side men certainly began to overstate their case, reacting defensively to Tennent's charges, their basic concern was for the order of Church life. The revival would not have been nearly so objectionable if it had not carried with it (of necessity, one would imagine) the disruption of congregations through itinerant intruders and a blatant disregard for the 'wholeness' of the Church. We must dwell on this point.

Even if we were to accept Trinterud's contention that the Synod at this time had no recognized form of government,¹²⁷ it would be highly out of order to suggest that the basic authority of the presbytery meant that presbyteries were completely independent of any authority which bound them to the Church Catholic. George Gillespie, who for a while after the schism sympathized with the situation of the New Side, nevertheless wrote that if the proceedings of the Presbytery of New Brunswick against the Synod could stand as valid, "Then a Presbytery may impose upon its Synod, and

¹²⁷ Ibid., p. 81. Ibid., p. 49, argues that the Westminster Directory was "recommended" rather than "adopted". He says, "This meant that the presbyteries were given complete autonomy regarding their own affairs, and that the synod regarded the Directory as a guide or pattern rather than as basic law. The synod, therefore, adopted for themselves no form of government, and made no attempt to set up any rules for the presbyteries".

Outside of the fact that the word "recommend" was used in a much stronger sense during this period than it is now understood, and that the Synod and presbyteries used it in other situations which clearly show its imperative meaning, Trinterud's argument is damaged by the fact that at the 1736 meeting of the Synod, when several Log College men were present, the Synod, reacting to the Hemphill affair, voted, nemine contradicente, that it has "adopted and still do adhere to the Westminster Confession, Catechisms, and Directory". Records, p. 127.

by bringing in members into the ministry who have not the qualifications required in the Standard aforesaid, and these members multiplying in a short time, may cast the Standards out of doors".¹²⁸ In other words, Christ gives His authority for ordination and discipline to His orderly officers working in collegio. When such officers of the church perform functions in His Name they do it as members of His whole Church. If there were no operative Standards this would give the totally organized Church (the colonial American Synod in this case) all the more reason to set the standards for its ministerial members. Trinterud imagines that the rights of an individual presbytery as over against its broader connections is a basic tenet of Presbyterianism, rather than seeing that a presbytery is the basic seat of Presbyterian authority only in its relationship to the total Church.

It was not long before Gilbert Tennent began to realize his and his party's responsibility for the schism. Some of the enthusiasm of the revival started to die away, Davenport was at the height of his madness, and disillusionment set in. On February 12, 1742 Tennent wrote to Dickinson:

I would to God the breach were healed, were it the will of the Almighty. As for my own part, wherein I have mismanaged in doing what I did, I do look upon it to be my duty, and should be willing to acknowledge it in the openest manner. I cannot justify the excessive heat of temper which has sometime appeared in my conduct. I have been of late, since I returned from New England, visited with much spiritual desertion and distresses...coming in a thick and almost continual succession, which have given me a greater discovery of myself than I think I ever had before. These things...have given me a clear view of the danger of every thing which tends to enthusiasm and division in the visible church.

After sealing the letter he tore it open to add a lengthy postscript, in which he said:

The late method of setting up separate meetings upon the supposed unregeneracy of pastors is enthusiastical, proud, and schismatical. All that fear God ought to oppose it as a most dangerous engine to bring the churches into the most damnable errors and confusions. The practice of openly exposing ministers who are supposed to be unconverted, in public discourse, by particular application of times and places, serves only to provoke them instead of doing

¹²⁸ Quoted in Briggs, op. cit., p. 247.

them any good, and declares our own arrogance. It is an unprecedented, divisial, and pernicious practice. It is lording it over our brethren to a degree superior to what any prelate has pretended, since the coming of Christ, so far as I know, the pope only excepted; though I really do not remember to have read that the pope went on at this rate. The sending out of unlearned men to teach others upon the supposition of their piety in ordinary cases seems to bring the ministry into contempt, to cherish enthusiasm, and bring all into confusion. 129

Tennent spent over twenty years trying to make amends for the unguarded and unthinking charges he had hurled at the Old Side ministers. 130

In 1748 Tennent wrote Irenicum Ecclesiasticum. Here he goes the whole way toward effecting reconciliation. He openly confesses that his denunciation of other ministers was

an evil pregnant with pride, malice, and mischief, though perhaps not perceived or intended; an evil which, under a cloak of misguided zeal for God, Christian liberty, and superior attainments in knowledge and religion, rebelliously opposes the clearest dictates of reason and humanity, and the plainest laws of revealed religion; an evil that, under the pretext of kindness and piety, cruelly rends our neighbour's character, saps the foundation of the church's peace, and turns its union, order, and harmony, into the wildest confusion of ungoverned anarchy, schism, prejudice, and hate. 131

Tennent's complete reversal is most welcome and actually rather astonishing. He says that he does not now doubt that the minority "ought freely to submit" to the determinations of the majority, in what the majority, "in matters of government... judge essential to the well-being of the church. For without this there could be no government at all". The majority has the right to judge what is essential to their constitution "and consequently to exclude from their society such as do not comply therewith". Without this relationship of the minority to the majority,

129 For the full letter Cf. Webster, op. cit., pp. 189-190; also printed in Hodge, op. cit., pp. 92-93.

130 As late as 1765 Tennent was still trying to undo what he had done at the time of the schism. Cf. Smith, E.A., The Presbyterian Ministry In American Culture, Philadelphia, 1962, p. 43n.

131 Quoted in Hodge, op. cit., II, pp. 134-135. It is quite strange that this important recantation by Tennent receives only the slightest notice from Trinterud. Cf. op. cit., p. 145.

"the minority party would have power to impose upon the major....which is absurd".¹³²

The question of polity was inconclusive. The Old Side party had overstated its case, occasionally seeming to indicate a desire for almost indiscriminate power in the church courts. Thomson, Robert Cross, and the others were straining for an extreme type of presbyterianism which would not have been Presbyterianism at all, since the balance of authority would have been lost. Indeed, if this form had ultimately prevailed it most certainly would have been opposed by the European presbyterian Churches.

On the other hand, the New side party was anxious to be rid of any corporate authority that would stand in the way of its revival. It vacillated in its claims for presbyterian authority, with presbyteries and synods seemingly accepted only in an advisory capacity. Thus the New Side members showed that they had little time or inclination to think of Church order and no foresight as to the state of the church when the inevitable 'cooling-off' of the revival would come. Perhaps the stating of positions on polity in such extremes was a healthy thing for the future church, since the absurdity of both became evident and paved the way for a workable system, both authoritative and flexible.

4. Formation of the "Conjunct Presbyteries" and the Synod of New York

The day after the schism, on June 2, 1741, the Presbytery of New Brunswick held an emergency meeting to consolidate its forces. Along with two ruling elders, the ministers present were Gilbert Tennent, William Tennent, Jr., Wales, and Rowland. They were joined by "correspondents", those men who adhered to the New Side but who had not been members of the Presbytery of New Brunswick: William Tennent, Charles Tennent, Blair, Alexander, Hutcheson, Creaghead, and Richard Treat. These seven ministers brought six ruling elders into the meeting, thus making a total of eleven ministers and eight ruling elders.

¹³² Ibid., p. 205.

The presbytery agreed "that [the] Protestation of [our] Brethren agst [us] is most unjust and sinful".¹³³ They moved to divide themselves into two presbyteries, New Brunswick, made up of its present membership, plus William Tennent and Richard Treat, and London Derry, composed of the remainder (London Derry soon had its name changed to the Presbytery of New Castle, New Side). The two presbyteries were appointed to meet at Philadelphia two months following "in the Capacity and Character of a Synod".¹³⁴ There is no record that this meeting took place.

The Conjunct Presbyteries soon were faced with several unpleasant situations, including John Cross' immorality with a young woman in his congregation and Alexander Creaghead's schismatical proposals for adopting the Scottish Solemn League and Covenant, both of which came before the body quite soon after the schism. Having his proposal refused, Creaghead withdrew from the Conjunct Presbyteries, becoming a self-styled Cameronian.¹³⁵ Moreover, the ventures of Davenport were proving almost too much of an embarrassment to be faced.

In addition, the Log College men had begun to reap some of the more unfortunate results of the revival harvest. As the heat of the Awakening began to cool they were confronted with the task of organizing and carrying on a church of their own. Inevitably, the revival and the revivalists had produced among the laity much distrust of any kind of Church order and government. The good results of the revival were a quickened interest in vital Christianity and a new zeal which was to become a transfusion for the bloodstream of the American church. But soon the newness of being renewed wears off. As Trinterud comments, to the layman "it seemed that

¹³³ New Brunswick; JPH, VII, p. 148.

¹³⁴ Ibid.

¹³⁵ Webster, op. cit., pp. 185-187. Creaghead, nearly fifteen years later, after failing in attempts to strengthen the Reformed Presbyterians, forsook the Covenanting path and was received back into the Presbyterian Church.

more was done for the salvation of men by those who defied all forms than by 'the old formalists'".¹³⁶ Most of the new members had not even the barest knowledge of anything connected with the Church; nor were they interested. When the warm, personal experience of 'conversion' faded, so members 'faded', many becoming Baptists and Quakers,¹³⁷ others having only memories of their 'experience'.

During the crucial period of the schism the one group in the Synod that did not take an active part was the Presbytery of New York. Absent from the 1741 Synod to a man, this group, led by Dickinson, had been busy in their own presbytery and churches, attempting to channel the new religious fervor into congregational life. Being removed from the storm-centers of the Log College revival, which operated mainly in New Jersey and Pennsylvania, they had not been involved directly in the schism and, officially, were still members of the Old Side Synod.

In 1742 seven of New York's eleven ministers were present at the meeting of the Synod in Philadelphia and immediately began, through the influence of Dickinson, to try to mend the rupture. They were repelled both by the Old Side's unreasoning and unconstitutional protestation and exclusion of the New Brunswick men and the anarchism displayed by the latter group. Dickinson was chosen moderator of the meeting and at once suggested that the Synod "should hold a conference with the Brunswick brethren that they rejected last year, in order to...make up that unhappy breach".¹³⁸ This was agreed to, and a committee of nine was appointed to meet in the afternoon with the members of the Presbytery of New Brunswick, which was meeting in Philadelphia at the same time. But it all proved "vain and

¹³⁶ Trinterud, op. cit., p. 109.

¹³⁷ Ibid., p. 120. Trinterud adds further that a number of those 'converted' by the revival "soon departed when the New Side began, after 1741, to create form and order for the guidance and direction of the free spirit of the mass revival". Ibid., p. 207.

¹³⁸ Records, p. 162.

fruitless".¹³⁹ The Log College men refused to let anyone who had signed the protestation be a judge of the situation. The Old Side men said that it had been a synodical action and therefore the signers had every right to participate in any deliberations for reunion.

Seeing the futility of the situation, a protest was entered several days later by seven ministers and three ruling elders, all members of the Presbytery of New York. The protest claimed that the exclusion of the New Brunswick party had been unconstitutional. "We therefore...protest, that these members of the New-Brunswick Presbytery, and their adherents...are to be owned...as members of this Synod, until they are excluded by a regular and impartial process against them, according to the methods prescribed in sacred Scripture, and practised by the churches of the Presbyterian persuasion".¹⁴⁰

There the matter stood until the following year's meeting, when a lengthy and detailed overture for composing the existing differences was presented to the Synod from the Presbytery of New York.¹⁴¹ Its six points called for the withdrawal of the protestation, the enforcement of the rule requiring synodical examination of candidates (which Dickinson had always favored), the opening of all pulpits in the Synod to preachers other than the stated pastor, but under the control of the presbyteries and the Synod, the orderly filing of complaints against any minister, rather than airing them publicly, the burying of past differences, and, finally, the proposal, that if some such plan of accommodation be unacceptable, that a separate Synod of New York, be organized. The Synod voted on the overture, and it was rejected.

¹³⁹ Ibid.

¹⁴⁰ Ibid., p. 163.

¹⁴¹ Ibid., pp. 166-168. The minutes of the Presbytery of New York are not extant.

Then Dickinson, Pemberton, Pierson, and Aaron Burr, all members of the Presbytery of New York, present a paper in their own names which states: "I cannot...at present see my way clear to sit and act as though we were the Synod of Philadelphia, while the New Brunswick Presbytery, and the other members with them, are kept out of the Synod in the manner they now are".¹⁴² The seven points in the paper actually are sharp criticism of the Log College men for the principles espoused in the Apology, "especially that whereby they declare that Presbyteries and Synods have no right to make any agreements, or come to any determinations by votes that shall bind any members who do not give their consent to those conclusions or determinations". Without a recantation of these principles, say Dickinson and the others, the New Brunswick men could never be re-admitted as members of the Synod.

Moreover, intrusions must cease. The revivalists must admit "that all such practices are of pernicious tendency, and inconsistent with the Presbyterian plan". They must agree to forsake all condemnation of the character of other ministers unless these men are proved guilty of them by a court of the church. They must renounce all such tenets as were proclaimed in the Nottingham sermon, "which are contrary to our Presbyterian plan and subversive of gospel order, and a floodgate to let in divisions and disorders into the church". Finally, the Log College men must stop the practice of

asserting an inward call to the ministry, in opposition and contradiction to the outward call, [i.e.]...ordaining to the gospel ministry...All who maintain [these practices]...can be no members of a Presbyterian...church, because they take all government out of the hands of a Synod or Presbytery, and give it to any person that hath ignorance and impudence enough to bring God's house into confusion.¹⁴³

Any suggestion that Dickinson and the other members of the Presbytery of New York were sympathetic to the New Brunswick views on Church order must give way in face

¹⁴² Ibid., p. 168. The proposals made by these three men are recorded in the Records on pp. 168-170.

¹⁴³ Ibid., p. 169.

of this evidence.

The Synod agreed that the proposals were "reasonable, in order to open a way toward an accommodation and interview between these brethren and us".¹⁴⁴ They were sent to the Conjoint Presbyteries, meeting then in Philadelphia,¹⁴⁵ and a hasty answer was received in their name from William Tennent, Jr., rejecting the recommendations and making it clear that as long as the protestation stood intact the New Brunswick party would not discuss reunion. The Synod ended the following day, and two-and-a-half months later, in August, the Presbytery of New York met with the Conjoint Presbyteries at New Brunswick. The entire Presbytery of New York was absent from the 1744 meeting of the Synod in Philadelphia.

It was in this setting that the Synod convened on May 22, 1745. Dickinson, Pierson, and Pemberton were present from the Presbytery of New York and asked the Synod to appoint a committee to attempt to iron out differences between the Synod and themselves.¹⁴⁶ The proposals made by the Synod were carefully thought out and logically presented,¹⁴⁷ but did not give an inch from the Old Side position. It was clear that the protestation would not be revoked at this time. The Synod would consider reunion with the revivalists only if new congregations set up in competition with the Synod's old charges were disbanded and members of such churches encouraged to return to their original parishes. Only those New Side men who were recognized members of the Synod before the Schism would be automatically re-instated

¹⁴⁴ Ibid., p. 170.

¹⁴⁵ It is clear from the minutes of the Presbytery of New Brunswick; JPH, VII, pp. 337-339, that this was a conjoint meeting of the two presbyteries. But it is very difficult to tell in the case of other meetings, all minutes being entered in the New Brunswick record book. It appears that the Presbytery of New Castle, New Side, never held any separate meetings prior to the formation of the Synod of New York in 1745.

¹⁴⁶ Records, p. 178.

¹⁴⁷ Cf. Ibid., pp. 179-181.

to membership; all men, from Rowland on, who had been licensed and ordained contrary to the Synod's order for examination of candidates would have to be examined before being admitted as members (on this point the New York men agreed).

Where the Presbytery of New York had called for "open pulpits", the Synod saw, quite correctly, that this could well lead to chaos. Therefore, it said that no member should "preach in the congregation of another brother without judicial appointment, or being invited by his brother to preach for him". In the same way, no presbytery should "invade the charge and right of other Presbyteries". ¹⁴⁸

The members of the Presbytery of New York (who had been commissioned to act for that body) could not agree to all these requirements. Most certainly the absence of an admission of unlawful proceeding in expelling the New Brunswick party in the first place was the greatest sore point with the New York men. Therefore, they proposed that by mutual agreement there be organized a Synod of New York, desiring that it be done "with the consent of this body, that they may not be thought to set up and act in opposition to this [Synod], and that there may be a foundation for the two Synods to consult and act in mutual concert with one another hereafter, and maintain love and brotherly kindness with each other". ¹⁴⁹ Having no choice, the Synod agreed, and all hopes for an immediate reunion died. On September 19 the Presbyteries of New York, New Brunswick, and New Castle, New Side, met at Elizabethtown, New Jersey. The Synod of New York was born.

C. Conclusions

Various questions of Church order played a significant role in the controversy which led to American Presbyterianism's first schism. Whether or not the courts of the church had the right to impose a Creed on their members, to control the

¹⁴⁸ Ibid., p. 180.

¹⁴⁹ Ibid., p. 181.

ministerial movements of their members, and to set basic educational qualifications for the members were matters which burned not only the fringe but the whole fabric of church life from 1727-1741.

The anti-revival, or Old Side, men were correct in their belief that the revivalist party, under the leadership of Gilbert Tennent, cared little for orderly process within the church. The Log College men appealed for the power of an individual presbytery as over against the whole Church and in so doing strikingly revealed the possibility of the 'Congregationalism' of a presbytery; that is, one presbytery jealously guarding the 'autonomy' of its area and interest. But, according to the New Brunswick party, even then, there was no real authority.

The Old Side reacted foolishly, stating its case in extremes, although much responsibility must be placed upon Tennent for his sermon. While the anti-revivalists struggled to keep their house in order they blindly pulled down that house, not only on their enemies, but also on themselves. The one group which might have helped the church to avoid this crash had been absent at the crucial point; yet the Presbytery of New York was coming to hold Church order in quite high regard, and while reacting strongly against the methods of the Tennents they also rejected the Old Side's returning disorder for disorder, in the form of the protestation. Such firmness of order, yet liberality of spirit, could point American Presbyterianism to the basis of a re-united church.

We move, then, to the life and order of the synods and presbyteries during the period of separation.

CHAPTER SEVEN

The Synods of Philadelphia and New York, 1745-1758A. A comparison of the polities

At its 1746 meeting the Synod of Philadelphia addressed a letter to the Synod of New York, asking that they indicate "the plan on which you have erected yourselves".¹ This was of vital importance to the Old Side men, and they must have been pleased with many of the points upon which the New Side Synod had established its constitution, at its first meeting in September of 1745.

The Westminster Confession and Catechisms were adopted as the "public confession" of the Synod, according to the Adopting act of 1729, and the Directory was declared to be their "general plan of worship and discipline". In all matters of discipline the "major vote of ministers and elders" in the Synod was to be determinative; the minority must acquiesce, and if any dissenting member could not do that in conscience he was to "peaceably withdraw" from the Synod. If any member of the Synod believed another to be faulty "with respect to error in doctrine, immorality in life, or negligence in his ministry, he shall not on any account, propagate the scandal"; such charges were to be dealt with privately and then, if necessary, judicially.²

During the next few years the Synod of New York was forced to become even more explicit as to its authority and its plan of government. For lack of ministers, a number of Dutch Reformed congregations and individuals had been joining Presbyterian churches, but some of the Dutch ministers had called in question "the constitution, order, and discipline" of the Synod of New York and were spreading "misrepresentations". In order to remove the misrepresentations and to make for a more cordial

¹ Records, p. 186.

² Ibid., p. 233.

relationship with the Dutch Reformed churches

we do hereby declare and testify our constitution, order, and discipline, to be in harmony with the established church of Scotland. The Westminster Confession, Catechisms, and Directory for public worship and church government adopted by them, are in like manner received and adopted by us. We declare ourselves united with that church in the same faith, order, and discipline. ³

In 1753, in a letter addressed to the General Assembly of the Church of Scotland, the Synod informed the Assembly that it was composed of many congregations in New York, New Jersey, Pennsylvania, Maryland, Virginia, and North Carolina, and that the Synod conformed to "the constitution of the Church of Scotland, and have adopted her standards of doctrine, worship, and discipline". ⁴ In requesting funds for the College of New Jersey, "The young daughter of the Church of Scotland, helpless and exposed in this foreign land, cries to her tender and powerful mother for relief". ⁵

It is obvious from all this that the Log College party completely capitulated to the New York men in the matter of polity. Gillett puts it well:

The New Brunswick party made a virtual confession of the errors they had committed, and the wrongs they had done. They...surrendered to the New York brethren what the authority of the Philadelphia Synod could not extort..... A great point had been gained--by whatever influences or motives--when they were willing to renounce their former violent and divisive courses, discountenance the use of invective and slander, and abide by the decision of a majority of the body to which they belonged. ⁶

This was the basic point conceded: that a majority vote in the judicatories of the church was binding on the minority. It was to be true not only for presbyteries but for the Synod also; and any idea that the Synod would act only in an advisory capacity was immediately dispelled. This is also fully evident from the subsequent

³ Ibid., p. 245.

⁴ Ibid., p. 257n.

⁵ Ibid., pp. 257n.-258n.

⁶ Quoted in Briggs, Charles A., American Presbyterianism, etc. Edinburgh, 1885, p. 271.

acts of this Synod. During the same period, the Synod of Philadelphia, as it was now regularly called, continued to operate on the same standards, and a comparison of the two reveals at many points a striking similarity.

1. Meetings

From 1746-1758 the two synods each met fourteen times. There was an annual meeting, plus an extra meeting for the Synod of New York in 1750 and one for the Synod of Philadelphia in 1751. While the Synod of Philadelphia never varied its place of meeting from Philadelphia, the Synod of New York chose several places: After meeting at Dickinson's church in Elizabethtown, New Jersey for its organization in 1745, it met in the subsequent years once in New York City, three times in Philadelphia, and five times each in Maidenhead and Newark, New Jersey. The average length for meetings of the Synod of Philadelphia was three-and-a-half days, for the Synod of New York two-and-a-half days. Both in 1746 and 1747 the meeting of the Synod of New York lasted only one day.

In attendance, neither Side was exceptional, although Philadelphia showed a somewhat better record in this area of churchmanship. It had an average ministerial membership, during the period, of twenty-one, with an average attendance of twelve, while the Synod of New York, with an average membership of fifty-four, shows only half this number of ministers in average attendance. The difference in the attendance of ruling elders was large. Philadelphia had an average of just over nine, while New York had an average of just under eleven. Figuring on an expected attendance of one ruling elder for every minister on the roll, the Synod of Philadelphia showed an average attendance of elders of approximately forty-five percent of its potential, the Synod of New York only twenty percent.

2. Use of Commissions and committees

Each Synod appointed a Commission, annually, to deal with matters which might arise between meetings. The average membership on the New York Commission was twelve, on the Philadelphia Commission approximately ten. In addition, during nine

of the thirteen years under consideration the Synod of Philadelphia appointed either three or four specific ruling elders to serve with the Commission when it met to deal with the Synod's Fund, and in two of these years, 1746 and 1749, the specifically-named elders were appointed also to serve on the Commission in whatever business came before it. In addition to appointing these elders, most years the Synod instructed the ministerial members of the Commission to attempt to bring their own elders to meetings which related to the Fund. Ruling elders are never mentioned in connection with the New York Commission.

It appears that apart from dealing with the Synod's Fund the Commission of the Synod of Philadelphia engaged in little or no activity. The Commission of the Synod of New York seems to have been inactive except on one occasion. In October of 1755 a committee appointed by the Synod met at Jamaica to consider David Bostwick's removal from that church to New York City. After much consideration, "The committee not having sufficient light to come to a full determination of that affair at this time, conclude that it be referred to the standing commission of the Synod of New York". ⁷

When the Commission met the following April to deal with the matter it received a note from Bostwick, saying that he was not able to attend the meeting because of his illness and that "he would acquiesce in their judgment about his removal to New York". ⁸ After a lengthy debate the Commission "cannot but judge it to be his duty to remove; and his pastoral relation to the church and congregation at Jamaica is dissolved for that purpose". The Jamaica church had petitioned strongly against his removal from them, but the Commission proceeded to assign supplies to fill the

⁷ Records, p. 272. For a petition to the Synod from a part of the congregation, asking for Bostwick to be made their pastor, which shows some of the difficulties in this church, Cf. "An Early Document Concerning the First Presbyterian Congregation of New York," JPH, I, pp. 236-245.

⁸ Records, op. cit.

now-vacant congregation. Moreover, it heard at this meeting from Charles Beatty, who was leaving on a temporary assignment as a chaplain, asking for supplies for his pulpit. "The commission accordingly appointed Abington Presbytery to supply four Sabbaths; the Presbytery of New York three Sabbaths; the Presbytery of New Brunswick four Sabbaths; and the Presbytery of New Castle five Sabbaths".⁹ Here, control over presbyteries was exercised by the Synod's commission.

A minute from the records of the Synod of Philadelphia reveals just how important a Commission was considered to be. A minister had asked his presbytery, New Castle, to dissolve the relationship between him and his congregation because of some difficulties there. The Presbytery of New Castle, since

the affair appeared to be of great importance, and required a final decision at their next meeting, humbly requests that the Synod would join some members out of the other Presbyteries with them to judge of that affair; and that said Presbytery, with such members, be appointed to act as a com[m]ission of the Synod, and in that capacity judge that affair.¹⁰

The request was granted.

It was the normal practice in both Synods for the moderator of the Synod also to be the moderator of the ensuing year's Commission. Samuel Davies' election as moderator of the Synod of New York in 1758 presented a problem. He lived in Virginia and was thus at a great distance from the majority of members on the Commission. If, therefore, the need arose for a meeting of the Commission, Gilbert Tennent was appointed as its moderator.¹¹

The Synod of Philadelphia used committees to serve as trustees for its school¹²

⁹ Ibid., p. 273.

¹⁰ Ibid., p. 210.

¹¹ Ibid., p. 281.

¹² Ibid., p. 185.

and to settle difficulties in congregations.¹³ The Synod of New York also, on occasion, sent committees to churches in order to settle difficulties.¹⁴ We have just seen how one of these committees referred its responsibility to the synodical Commission, in the case of the removal of Bostwick from Jamaica, but this does not imply that the committee had no power. Apart from this one committee to Jamaica all other committees sent by the Synod of New York to heal differences dealt with them authoritatively; and all of them deal with the perennial problems of the New York City congregation.¹⁵ The Synod in 1753 appointed a committee of nine ministers to meet in New York "with full power and authority to transact such things with respect to said congregation, as they shall judge necessary for the healing of the divisions of said congregation, and best interest of religion therein".¹⁶ Among other actions taken by this committee, it heard the co-pastor, Alexander Cumming, request dismission from the church; the committee received no objections, "and it is hereby dissolved accordingly".¹⁷ Another committee, meeting there the previous year, had been distressed to see that the congregation, while having had ruling elders early in its life (Cf. Supra, p.110n), had ceased to elect them. This committee "do conclude" that two elders should be elected immediately, and then proceeded to "nominate" two particular men "to that office".¹⁸ The people offered no objections

¹³ Ibid., pp. 198, 212.

¹⁴ Ibid., pp. 250, 252, 255, 260n-261n, 267, 271-272.

¹⁵ Cf. Nichols, Robert Hastings, Presbyterianism in New York State, Philadelphia, 1963, pp. 47-48 and Webster, Richard, A History of the Presbyterian Church in America, etc., Philadelphia, 1857, pp. 628-650.

¹⁶ Records, p. 255.

¹⁷ Ibid., p. 261n.

¹⁸ Ibid., p. 252.

to the men and signified their acceptance of them.

The Synod of New York also used committees to deal with the awarding of scholarships. The Synod had at first appointed students of the College of New Jersey to attend the meetings of Synod in order to be examined, but in 1756 it was found that there was too little time during the sessions of the meeting, and a committee was appointed to meet at Princeton, "to examine such candidates as offer [themselves], and determine what proportion of said money each shall have the ensuing year".¹⁹ This procedure was continued in following years.

Within the meetings of the Synods there was the usual appointment of committees to deal with specific matters coming before the court. There is no mention of a Committee of Bills and Overtures in the meetings of the Synod of Philadelphia, but New York began the practice in 1754, and it continued each year thereafter. The 1754 minute reads: "The Synod do agree, that hereafter there shall be a committee of overtures appointed at the beginning of the Synod, and that all new business shall first be laid before said committee, in order by them to be laid before the Synod".²⁰

3. Control of ministers

Apparently both Synods received all new ministers through their presbyteries. For example, the Synod of Philadelphia, in 1748, received a Scottish minister, David Brown, he having been "admitted a member of the Presbytery of New Castle".²¹ The one exception to this practice was the case of Alexander Miller. Miller, an Ulster Scot, applied to the Synod of Philadelphia on May 25, 1754 for membership, and acknowledged that his Irish presbytery, his sub-synod, and the Synod of Ulster had all "degraded" him, but argued that all this had been unjust. He produced a copy of the

¹⁹ Ibid., p. 271. The committee examined two students, granting one twenty-four pounds and the other twelve, for the year. Cf. Ibid., p. 278.

²⁰ Ibid., p. 262.

²¹ Ibid., p. 194. Brown returned to Scotland the following year.

minutes of the Presbytery of Letterkenny and asked the Synod to judge in his favor.

The Synod, quite correctly, stated that it had "no right to judge of the proceedings of the judicatories in Ireland; that they have not the minutes of the Sub-Synod and General Synod,"²² and for that reason think it would be partial and unfair to believe that so many men of candour and integrity would treat him in their judicatories severely and unjustly".²³ Letters were directed to Ireland regarding Miller, and in the meantime the Synod warned all its congregations not to receive him as a minister.

The following year Miller asked the Synod to intercede for him with the Ulster judicatories and presented a letter of "penitential acknowledgement" to be sent to Ireland. The Synod ordered one of its members to write and to include Miller's letter.²⁴ By the next year, 1756, the Synod had not heard from Ireland, and Miller was back again, asking to be received. The Synod judged that they must wait to receive an answer from Ulster, "if they think fit to send one this season; but resolve, that as he [Miller] has offered satisfaction to that Synod, by our mediation, and has behaved so as to be well respected as a minister among us, if either the Synod of Ireland send us no answer, or inform us that they have accepted his submission"

²² The Records of the General Synod of Ulster, Vol. II, Belfast, 1897, for June 20, 1749, show that Miller had been suspended by the Presbytery of Letterkenny, the suspension being upheld by the Sub-Synod of Derry. At this meeting of the General Synod the entire matter was reviewed, and Miller heard in his own defense. The Synod concluded that not only was the sentence of suspension just, but that it was its duty to depose Miller from the ministry, which was done unanimously. Miller had been guilty "of complicated & aggravated prevarication, and other gross immoralities", including a "clandestine Marriage" (pp. 343-344). Two years later the General Synod learned that Miller was still marrying couples, though without any right. If their censures could in any way affect him farther, "we would gladly inflict them" (p. 359).

²³ Records, p. 211.

²⁴ Ibid., p. 219.

the Synod would receive Miller as a member and install him.²⁵ By the meeting of the Synod in 1757 apparently no word had been received from Ireland, so the Synod appointed Miller's installment as a pastor and received him as a member.²⁶ On no other occasion did either synod take upon itself the initial reception of a minister.

The Synod of Philadelphia continued its requirement for the synodical examination of candidates. In 1750 two young men presented "themselves to examination by the Synod or committee, according to the act", and nine ministers and "as many of the other brethren as think fit" were appointed to meet with them at six o'clock the next morning. The men were approved.²⁷ It is interesting that the following year, when Hugh Knox and John Alison were prepared to be examined, the Synod, for lack of time, assigned the examination to be conducted by the Presbytery of New Castle three months following.²⁸ The fact that it was continued during the schism is conclusive evidence that the act requiring a synodical examination was not aimed merely at the Log College.

In the area of ministerial discipline, most action in both Synods was taken by the presbyteries. But there were several instances of synodical control. In 1751 the Synod of Philadelphia "disowned" as a member Samuel Evans, who had left his congregation and "travelled to England again and again".²⁹ The following year the Presbytery of New Castle referred to the Synod of Philadelphia the matter of Francis

²⁵ Ibid., p. 223.

²⁶ Ibid., p. 225. Miller's conduct during the next decade, finally ending in his deposition from the ministry, undoubtedly made the Synod wish that it had delayed his admission even longer.

²⁷ Ibid., pp. 198-199.

²⁸ Ibid., p. 201.

²⁹ Ibid., p. 200.

Alison's moving from New London to Philadelphia without consulting the presbytery.

The Synod judged

that the method he used is contrary to the Presbyterian plan. Yet considering that the circumstances which urged him to take the method he used, were very pressing, and that it was indeed almost impracticable to him to apply for the consent of Presbytery or Synod, in the orderly way.....we judge that his proceedings in said affair, are in a great measure excusable. Withal, the Synod advises, that for the future, its members be very cautious and guard against such proceedings as are contrary to our known approved methods....³⁰

The same Synod, in 1757, noticing that Samuel Black and John Craig had been absent for some years, ordered a member to write to them, "and signify that the Synod expects either that they will attend or write, and that in case of failure, the Synod will be obliged to disown them as members".³¹

In 1750 the Synod of Philadelphia faced a unique situation. Hector Alison, a young member of the Presbytery of New Castle, had become engaged to a young lady, but now he desired, "on some accounts", to be released from the commitment. His fiancée "scrupled the lawfulness of their being loosed from said obligation". And so the Synod had to determine "Whether a single man and woman having promised marriage to each other, may lawfully agree again to release each other from the promise". It was agreed, unanimously, that it was lawful, yet the Synod felt that Alison must be rebuked in order "to show our detestation of such rash proceedings in young people". Thomson admonished him before the Synod. Finally, it was thought necessary for Thomson and Robert Cathcart to accompany Alison to visit with "the young woman, in order to acquaint her with the Synod's opinion to endeavour to issue that affair".³²

³⁰ Ibid., p. 206.

³¹ Ibid., p. 226.

³² Ibid., p. 198. A very unusual feature of this case is that the Synod apparently attempted to 'protect' Alison by leaving a blank six times in the minutes where his name would have been inserted. But the following year there is a single slip which gives it all away. It is recorded that Thomson and Cathcart reported to the Synod that they had fulfilled the order to go to White Clay Creek, "about Mr. Alison's affair". Ibid., p. 200.

The Synod, therefore, was faithful in protecting its ministers.

Over in the Synod of New York there was a problem in 1751 concerning a Dutch minister. Some of the Log College men who had been most guilty of 'intrusion' a few years earlier were being 'intruded' upon. The preacher, named Vandreron, was "going from place to place" and "does much disturb some of our congregations". The Synod felt that it was its duty "to admonish all the people under their care to avoid the said Vandreron, and give no countenance to his preaching". ³³

The following year there was a "certain person" in the Synod's bounds who was pretending to be "a minister regularly ordained among the Presbyterians"; it seems that he had baptized both adults and infants. The Synod ruled that all ministerial acts performed by the man were invalid. ³⁴

Finally, the Synod of New York faced, in 1758, the case of Samuel Harker, probably of Huguenot descent, ³⁵ who was accused by his presbytery, New Brunswick, "as having imbibed and vented certain erroneous doctrines". ³⁶ He was absent from this meeting, and therefore the Synod decided that it could not proceed to judge; but several men were assigned to meet with him to discuss the matter. This was the beginning of a lengthy theological debate which was to end in Harker's dismissal from the ministry. ³⁷

Both Synods were keenly interested in sending missionaries to the frontiers, but the Synod of New York was aided by its larger numbers. The vast majority of missionary assignments made by both Synods was directed to the south: to Virginia and North

³³ Ibid., p. 245.

³⁴ Ibid., p. 249.

³⁵ Webster, op. cit., p. 622.

³⁶ Records, p. 283.

³⁷ Cf. Webster, op. cit., pp. 622-624; Briggs, op. cit., pp. 321-322; and Trinterud, Leonard J., The Forming of an American Tradition, etc., Philadelphia, 1949, p. 160.

Carolina. Most made within the Synod of New York were by action of the Synod itself, while within the Synod of Philadelphia a large part of the missions to frontier areas, as well as supplies to vacant congregations, were made under the direction of its presbyteries.

Upon its organization, the Synod of New York immediately began to authorize missionaries for Virginia, and as early as 1742, William Robinson,³⁸ who had been trained at the Log College, itinerated in Virginia. At its first meeting, in 1745, the Synod decided to send Robinson back into Virginia, but he died the following year, making a death-bed request that Samuel Davies take up the work. Davies became the most outstanding Church leader in Virginia during the eighteenth-century.³⁹ Specific appointments to Virginia were made by this Synod each year, even after 1755, when the Presbytery of Hanover was organized in that colony, and 1754 marked the beginning of missions from the Synod to North Carolina. A total of twenty different ministers and licentiates, three of them going twice, one three times, and one four, supplied Virginia and North Carolina during these years by appointment of the Synod of New York.

The Synod of Philadelphia also took responsibility for mission work to the south. Preaching appointments were made to Virginia beginning in 1748 and continued throughout the period, and annual assignments for North Carolina were begun in 1755. In all, eighteen different ministers and licentiates, three of them going twice, supplied in Virginia and North Carolina over two hundred and twenty-five "Sabbaths". Usually two a year would be sent by the Synod, each, in the beginning, going for two months, a period which, in 1755, was increased to three months. In cases where such a minister's congregation was vacant, the Synod appointed his presbytery to make

³⁸ Cf. Ford, Henry, The Scotch-Irish In America, Princeton, 1915, pp. 382-383.

³⁹ For an excellent account of Davies' work Cf. Gewehr, Wesley M., The Great Awakening in Virginia, 1740-1790, Durham, North Carolina, 1930, pp. 68-105.

certain that it was supplied at least one-half of the time he was gone.

Both Synods ordered a number of their members to supply the congregations of those who were absent from their charges on synodical business. This was especially applicable to those who went on the missionary journeys to the south (except when the presbyteries were ordered to make the appointment), but also was done extensively by the Synod of New York for the churches served by Gilbert Tennent and Samuel Davies when they were sent for a year to Great Britain to raise funds.⁴⁰ Such also was the case when several members were absent from their congregations, serving as military chaplains.⁴¹

It was inevitable that with so much missionary effort in Virginia and North Carolina by both Sides that there would be collision.⁴² Some of the New York men came into dispute with John Craig of the Synod of Philadelphia, who in September of 1740 had been ordained and installed by the Presbytery of Donegal in a pastorate on the Shenandoah, thereby becoming the first Presbyterian minister settled in Virginia.⁴³ William Robinson became the first Presbyterian minister to labor in North Carolina,⁴⁴ being sent by the Synod of New York; but he did not settle there.

Yet there was an attempt on both Sides to avoid conflict on the mission field. This is reflected by a minute of the Synod of Philadelphia, at its meeting in 1756:

The Synod recommend it to...all such as may be sent by us to supply these distant parts, to study in all their public administrations and private conversations, to promote peace and unity among the societies [i.e. congregations], and to avoid whatever may tend to foment divisions and party

⁴⁰ Cf. Records, pp. 255-256, 261-262.

⁴¹ Cf. Ibid., p. 283.

⁴² Cf. Foote, W.H., Sketches of Virginia (Second Series), New York, 1855, p. 31.

⁴³ Ibid., pp. 28ff.

⁴⁴ Foote, W.H., Sketches of North Carolina, etc., New York, 1846, p. 158.

spirit; and to treat every minister of the gospel from the Synod of New York....in a brotherly manner; as we desire to promote true religion and not party designs. ⁴⁵

4. Control of congregations

Both Synods exercised very little direct control over local congregations, this being left, in the main, to the presbyteries. There are, however, a few cases which should be noted. The only thing relative to the point in the records of the Synod of Philadelphia was in 1755, when it appears that some sessions had been insisting that their ministers refrain from proposing the regular collection for the synodical Fund. In response to this, the Synod made a judgement regarding the relative authority of a local session and that of the higher judicatories of the church. It was

Ordered, That every minister, according to our former agreement, propose the collection for the fund to his congregation, and as it is a Synodical appointment, it is inconsistent with our church government to be under the check or prohibition of a church session; they indeed may give or withhold their charity, but may not prevent a minister to propose it publicly, according to our appointment. ⁴⁶

The 1748 Synod of New York received two calls for ministers, directly from congregations. ⁴⁷ With the first, from Timber Ridge and the Forks of James' River to William Dean, the Synod properly referred the entire matter to his presbytery, New Castle. But when a call for Eliab Byram was presented from Falling Spring and New Providence in Virginia the Synod processed it itself, not referring the matter to Byram's presbytery, New York. No call from a congregation was received by the Synod of Philadelphia during these years.

⁴⁵ Records, p. 220. Each synod lost thirteen ministers through death. Given the number of members on the rolls, this represented nearly three times greater a loss to the Synod of Philadelphia.

⁴⁶ Ibid., p. 215.

⁴⁷ Ibid., p. 237.

In 1750 the Synod of New York had a case referred to it from the Presbytery of New Brunswick in which the congregation at Tehicken had decided the location of its new meeting house by drawing a lot. The Synod unanimously disapproved of the practice of using a "lottery" to determine controversies; but since this lot was "fairly cast, and consequently binding upon the parties concerned" it should stand as valid. And the Synod ordered that a "solemn admonition" be given to those who had broken the obligations placed upon them by this lot. ⁴⁸

When the same presbytery presented a case in 1756, in which a minister and a congregation were desiring the pastoral relation to be established, the Synod exercised full authority over a dissatisfied faction in the church. This small group in the Bedminster congregation opposed the permanent settlement there of James McCrea and claimed that it would not cooperate with him as pastor. The Synod judged that this people would not "be set off from the congregation and have supplies for themselves, [n]or be refunded any part of the money they have expended in building their meeting-house". ⁴⁹

The remainder of the Synod of New York's congregational problems centered in the New York City church. We have seen how the Synod was forced to send committees to the church to attempt to settle the differences which constantly threatened to split it, but the Synod itself, at several of its meetings, made authoritative decisions relating to the matter. In 1752 it ruled that elders must be elected in the church, since the practice had fallen into disuse there. While the ministers administered the government and discipline of the congregation, a congregational "committee" or Board of Trustees had been in use to supervise all the "temporal" affairs. The Scottish element in the congregation had protested strongly against

⁴⁸ Ibid., pp. 241-242.

⁴⁹ Ibid., p. 274.

this procedure, and the co-pastor, Alexander Cumming, had attempted, as a pastor of the church, to meet with the Trustees.

In these circumstances the Synod made a very unhappy decision. It ruled

That it is not inconsistent with the Presbyterian plan of government, nor the institution of our Lord Jesus Christ, that trustees, or a committee chosen by the congregation, should have the disposal and application of the public money raised by said congregation, to the uses for which it was designed..... Ministers of the gospel, by virtue of their office, have no right to sit with or preside over such trustees or committees. ⁵⁰

Cumming did not violate his ordination vows in attempting to meet with the Trustees, said the Synod, but in so doing he acted "imprudently". The Synod stated that the reason he did not violate his ordination vows was because such vows are related only to "the work of the ministry". ⁵¹ Thus the Synod set up a most unfortunate separation between the 'spiritual' and 'temporal' in a congregation and helped to complicate the question of authority in the local church.

Finally, in 1756, the Synod received a paper presented by a faction of the New York City congregation, "which the Synod observe contains insulting and even threatening expressions". It accused the Synod of "partiality and dishonesty". This kind of conduct by Christians, said the Synod, "towards a judicature of Jesus Christ is insufferably arrogant, presumptuous....and contrary to the commands of our Lord, who has ordered us to suffer no man to despise us acting properly in our own office". ⁵² It proceeded to determine on several points raised, feeling that it should "condescend to the weakness, and...bear with the imperfections of those who are under our care". On a question regarding what version of the Psalter was to be sung in this people's worship, a question that had arisen time and again,

⁵⁰ Ibid., p. 249.

⁵¹ Ibid., p. 250. In 1755 the Synod slightly modified its position regarding the Board of Trustees in the New York church and ordered that more ruling elders and deacons be elected by the congregation "as soon as they conveniently can". Cf. Ibid., p. 267.

⁵² Ibid., p. 274.

the Synod judged that Watt's version was fully permissible, if that was what the majority of the congregation wanted; "and determine that this judgment shall be finally decisive as to this affair".⁵³

5. Control of presbyteries

In 1746 the Synod of Philadelphia ordered its presbyteries to take upon themselves the task of seeing that their members attend the annual meetings of the Synod.⁵⁴ Presbyteries' minutes, as well as their ministers, were often missing from the Synod, and in 1747 the Presbytery of New Castle was "found remarkably guilty of neglecting to bring their Presbytery book.....".⁵⁵ The Synod of New York, in 1753, instructed its presbyteries "to call those sessions to account that do not send elders" to the meetings of the Synod and presbytery and to require a session who sends a ruling elder representative to a higher court to discipline him if he failed to fulfill the appointment.⁵⁶

When the Presbytery of Philadelphia needed a minister on a temporary basis who could preach in Welsh to the people of Tre Dyffryn, they looked to Timothy Griffith, a member of the Presbytery of New Castle. But rather than approach that presbytery, Philadelphia asked the Synod of Philadelphia for permission to have him preach in the charge. This was approved, and the Presbytery of New Castle was ordered to excuse Griffith from his duties in that presbytery during the time.⁵⁷ There undoubtedly was a real sensitiveness on the part of the presbyteries in the Synod of Philadelphia regarding ministers from another presbytery preaching within their

⁵³ Ibid., p. 275.

⁵⁴ Ibid., p. 184.

⁵⁵ Ibid., p. 190.

⁵⁶ Ibid., p. 256.

⁵⁷ Ibid., p. 191.

bounds, because of the problems that had led to the schism, and it was certainly for this reason that the Presbytery of Philadelphia sought to avoid any appearance of disorderliness and so petitioned the Synod for permission. But when there was to be a permanent change for a minister he would become a member of the presbytery into whose bounds he was moving; therefore, Francis Alison asked the Synod in 1752 for permission to join the Presbytery of Philadelphia and be severed from the Presbytery of New Castle.⁵⁸ This normally would have been a matter for the two presbyteries concerned, but because of the difficulties that Alison faced due to his move, he thought it the wisest policy to receive the Synod's approval.

The tendency in both Synods was to delegate a greater amount of responsibility to their presbyteries. Thus, in 1753, the Synod of Philadelphia ordered that each of its three presbyteries appoint one man each year to preach during the sessions of the Synod, instead of making the appointments directly itself. Of more consequence was the action of this Synod the previous year in assigning the Presbytery of New Castle to make examinations of the Synod's school.⁵⁹ Also significant was a procedure adopted by the Synod of New York regarding collections to support needy students at the College of New Jersey: in 1751 it was ordered that these "contributions shall be at the disposal of such respective Presbyteries where they are made",⁶⁰ and the following year a collection was called for to meet the actual operating expenses of the College. Again the presbyteries were to be in charge of the operation, even to the extent that the funds collected were to be "transmitted to the President of the college by each Presbytery".⁶¹ In 1753 it was ordered

⁵⁸ Ibid., p. 206.

⁵⁹ Ibid., pp. 208-209, 212.

⁶⁰ Ibid., p. 246.

⁶¹ Ibid., p. 248.

that each presbytery keep check on their own faithfulness in carrying through the collection and that the presbyteries make report of this at the next meeting of the Synod.⁶² Yet the procedure was not consistent, for in 1755 the Synod again called for a collection for the operating expenses of the College, and while the presbyteries were to make the collections, the money was to be sent to the Synod rather than directly to the College.⁶³

When a Dutch Reformed congregation asked the Synod of New York in 1750 to be taken under its care "and that a certain person now preaching among them may be taken under examination, and if approved, ordained a minister to them", the Synod appointed a committee to look into the matter.⁶⁴ But it failed to meet, and so the following year the Synod referred the entire affair to the determination of the Presbytery of New Brunswick, "to transact in it according as they shall judge best".⁶⁵

The Synod of Philadelphia emerged from the period with the same presbyteries with which it had entered it, but the Synod of New York erected two new presbyteries and received a third into its membership. In 1748 a presbytery calling itself the Presbytery of Suffolk County applied for membership in the Synod. It was composed of six congregations, far out on eastern Long Island, which had formed the presbytery the previous year and wanted to come into the main stream of Presbyterian

⁶² Ibid., p. 251.

⁶³ Ibid., p. 264. In December of 1755 the newly-organized Presbytery of Hanover responded, "that considering the present impoverish'd State of the Colony [Virginia], in general, & of our Congregations, in particular, such a proposal would be quite impracticable; & appoint that the Members that attend the Synod next year, report the same to the Synod". Mss. minutes, Presbytery of Hanover, p. 2.

⁶⁴ Ibid., p. 242.

⁶⁵ Ibid., p. 245.

life.⁶⁶ In asking to be received, it indicated that it desired to become a part of the Synod on the condition that "one or two of their members in all time to come, be allowed the privilege of representing them in the Synod, and acting from them as delegates". The Synod replied that it was willing to make reasonable allowances for absences at the meetings of the Synod of members of this presbytery, seeing that it was very far from the area where the Synod met. If the Synod ever became a "delegated" body then the Presbytery of Suffolk might join in that privilege with the other presbyteries. But otherwise "it would be unprecedented and unequal, and of bad tendency".⁶⁷ The following year the Presbytery of Suffolk acknowledged its acceptance of this wise synodical decision and was received officially as a judicatory of the Synod.

In 1751 a petition was presented to the Synod from the Presbytery of New Brunswick asking for the erection of a new presbytery. After considering the matter the Synod "do erect.....a distinct Presbytery by the name of the Presbytery of Abington, and also appoint their first meeting to be at Philadelphia the third Wednesday in May next".⁶⁸ Four years later the Synod, in a similar action, created the Presbytery of Hanover, in Virginia.⁶⁹ In each of these cases the Synod exercised complete and determinative control over the erection or admission of new presbyteries.

It is interesting to note that every year each presbytery of the Synod of Philadelphia reported the candidates it had taken under trial, or licensed, or

⁶⁶ Cf. Nichols, op. cit., pp. 45-46. At its formation in 1747 the presbytery stated that the "Directory of the Church of Scotland, as to congregational and classical Assemblies, in the material and essential Articles thereof" will be the "Rules of our Procedure". For the full basis of constitution, Cf. Mss. minutes, Presbytery of Suffolk, Vol. I, pp. 3-5.

⁶⁷ Records, pp. 236-237.

⁶⁸ Ibid., p. 246.

⁶⁹ Ibid., pp. 264-265. Cf. Foote, Sketches of Virginia, op. cit., pp. 72ff.

ordained. Such presbyterial report is not recorded in the minutes of the Synod of New York.

6. Collections and Funds

Both Synods took considerable initiative in the collection and administration of monies for the work of the church beyond the congregational level. The Synod of Philadelphia continued the Fund which it had established in 1717 (Cf. Supra, p. 106) and from it helped to pay the debts of its school,⁷⁰ supplemented the salary of a minister when the need arose,⁷¹ and provided money for the building of a new meeting house.⁷² In 1747 the Synod established a separate fund for its school and indicated that those congregations which contributed would not be expected, in the same year, to contribute to the general Fund.⁷³ These monies for the school paid salaries and other expenses, and if it were to come to the point where it was not sufficient, the deficit was to be paid the school from the annual interest realized by the general Fund.⁷⁴

The Synod of New York had no general synodical Fund, but it established a fund in 1751 for missionary work to Indians, which was to be supplied by a yearly collection, with all money received sent directly to the Synod.⁷⁵ This has been called "the beginning of the Foreign Mission Work of American Presbyterianism".⁷⁶ The following

⁷⁰ Ibid., p. 192.

⁷¹ Ibid., p. 201.

⁷² Ibid.

⁷³ Ibid., p. 192.

⁷⁴ Ibid., p. 194.

⁷⁵ Ibid., pp. 245-246.

⁷⁶ Briggs, op. cit., p. 302. For a brief but adequate discussion of work among the Indians, Cf. Briggs, pp. 297-303.

year nineteen out of the twenty-nine ministers present brought funds for the Indian missionary enterprise,⁷⁷ and in 1756 the Synod drew up a detailed plan of how the money was to be appropriated.⁷⁸

This Synod appointed, also in 1751, an annual collection among its congregations for the support of students in the college of New Jersey, but the collection and distribution of the monies from this fund were assigned to the respective presbyteries.⁷⁹ For the time being, it was to be in addition to the collection for Indian work, but the following year, when renewing the call for support of students, the Synod temporarily suspended all other church-wide collections.⁸⁰

At its 1753 meeting the Synod appointed Gilbert Tennent and Samuel Davies "to take a voyage to Europe on the important affairs of said college".⁸¹ The following year the two visited England, Scotland, and Ireland and returned after raising nearly £4,000.⁸² Additional money was received in Britain for the Indian mission.⁸³

In 1754 Francis Alison proposed to the Synod of Philadelphia that a fund be established by the Synod for the support of ministers' widows; the suggestion was drawn-up and signed by all the ministers present. To put the plan into action, it was agreed

that each Presbytery shall choose a member to represent them, and send by

⁷⁷ Records, p. 248.

⁷⁸ Ibid., p. 269.

⁷⁹ Ibid., p. 246.

⁸⁰ Ibid., p. 248.

⁸¹ Ibid., p. 252.

⁸² Briggs, op. cit., p. 309.

⁸³ Records, pp. 266-267.

him their several quotas to the fund the second Wednesday of October next, and these representatives then met, shall put the stock into the hands of appointed trustees, and see the proper regulations of it, a copy whereof shall be returned to each Presbytery. ⁸⁴

The following year a detailed and excellent preliminary plan was approved by the Synod, ⁸⁵ and all sixteen ministers then present contributed their initial fee. In applying for a charter, the Synod referred to the Widow's Fund as an "imitation of the laudable example of the Church of Scotland". ⁸⁶

The Synod of New York attempted to establish such a fund, but it was not realized. A proposal was made in 1755, ⁸⁷ but when it was discussed the next year no plan had as yet been produced. ⁸⁸ The same situation prevailed in 1757 ⁸⁹ and 1758, ⁹⁰ the matter being deferred each year to the following meeting. Therefore, at the reunion of the two Synods the Widow's Fund of the Synod of Philadelphia was expanded to cover the entire united Synod. ⁹¹

7. Education

We have noted (Cf. Supra, p.108) that attempts had been made in the Synod as

⁸⁴ Ibid., p. 213.

⁸⁵ Ibid., pp. 215-217.

⁸⁶ Ibid., p. 225. The Ministers' Widows Fund of the Church of Scotland was established by the General Assembly in May of 1718. One of the first men to propose the plan in that church was Patrick Cowper, minister at Pittenweem. Cf. M'Crie, Thomas (ed.), The Correspondence of the Rev. Robert Wodrow, Edinburgh, 1843, Vol. II, Letters LXIII, LXXIV, CXIII, and CXIX.

⁸⁷ Records, p. 269.

⁸⁸ Ibid., p. 273.

⁸⁹ Ibid., pp. 278-279.

⁹⁰ Ibid., p. 282.

⁹¹ The fund continues today, with no official connection to the Presbyterian Church, as the Presbyterian Ministers' Fund and is the oldest insurance company in America.

early as 1739 to establish an official synodical school. These efforts were resumed in 1743 when, in November, three presbyteries belonging to the Synod of Philadelphia held a meeting "by a private agreement" to discuss the matter. They reported their action to the Synod in 1744, stating that "the proper method for this end cannot be so well compassed without the Synod" and referring the entire matter to that body.⁹²

The Synod at once approved the plan of opening such an institution at New London, Pennsylvania and appointed that the school should operate, without charge, for students to study "the languages, philosophy, and divinity". Moreover, Francis Alison was appointed "master" of the institution, to receive £20 per annum, and Alison was to choose an "usher", who would receive £15. This responsibility was to be in addition to Alison's work as pastor at New London, but the Synod specified that he would have no additional responsibilities in the life of the church, "save only attending church judicatures".⁹³

The school was under the direct "inspection" of the Synod. Trustees were chosen who would meet twice a year to inspect the master's

diligence and method of teaching, to direct what authors are chiefly to be read in the several branches of learning, to examine the scholars as to their proficiency and good conduct, and apply the money procured to such uses as they judge proper, and to order all affairs relating unto the school. And the trustees are yearly to be accountable to the Synod.⁹⁴

It is evident that the Synod of Philadelphia exercised complete control over this institution, and that it was a synodical school in the fullest sense.

The Synod of New York saw its own need for an educational institution. William Tennent died in 1746, but the Log College had, for all intents, ceased to function even before that time. As Briggs says, "The time had come to establish something

⁹² Records, p. 175.

⁹³ Ibid., pp. 175-176.

⁹⁴ Ibid., p. 187, in a letter to President Clap of Yale. Cf. the entire letter, pp. 186-189, for an account of the Synod's efforts toward establishing a school.

better in its place".⁹⁵ In October of 1746 Dickinson and six other ministers received a charter for a college at Elizabethtown: the College of New Jersey. It is quite surprising that there is no mention at all of this school in the Synod's minutes until 1751, and even then it is but a passing reference. The reason for this lack of reference was the greatest difference between this institution and the school operated by the Synod of Philadelphia; that is, the College of New Jersey was not operated by the Synod of New York. True, at the outset its trustees were all Presbyterians, but the college was in no way officially responsible to any church judicatory. Two years later a new charter was issued and the Board of Trustees enlarged, including now the membership of four members of the civil Council of New Jersey.⁹⁶ The Synod made no inspection of the institution, and when official business was to be transacted between the Synod and the college, committees representing both were appointed.⁹⁷

Thus, while the College of New Jersey was controlled by Presbyterians, it stood outside any ordered connection to the church. The academy operated by the Synod of Philadelphia was the only official school operated during this period by a judicature of the church.⁹⁸

The Synod of Philadelphia made a unique contribution to the 'further education' of its ministers by establishing in 1755 a 'revolving library', with books that had been donated from Dublin. Any books applicable to the school were to be lent to the master, and others could be borrowed by the Synod's ministers on a regulated

⁹⁵ Briggs, op. cit., p. 306.

⁹⁶ Cf. Trinterud, op. cit., p. 125.

⁹⁷ Cf. Records, p. 281.

⁹⁸ Seventeen academies, operated by Presbyterian ministers, were opened during the period from 1739-1758. For a complete list, Cf. Funk, Henry D., "The Influence of the Presbyterian Church in Early American History," JPH, XII, p. 184.

basis.⁹⁹

Apparently the only official publication carried on by either Synod was an effort by the Synod of Philadelphia to check the Seceder movement. In 1754 the Synod appointed two of its members to publish a series of tracts, representing some of the most "dangerous opinions and practices of the seceders, and get them printed", at the Synod's expense.¹⁰⁰

B. The order and work of the presbyteries

As we have noted, during the period of separation from 1741-1758, there were three presbyteries operative under the Synod of Philadelphia. These were New Castle, Philadelphia, and Donegal. Of these, the records are extant only for Philadelphia, from 1741-1746 and Donegal, from 1741-1750. The presbyteries under the Synod of New York were New Castle (New Side), New Brunswick, New York, Abington, Hanover, and Suffolk. Of these, the records are extant for New Brunswick during the entire period; for Abington, from 1752-1758; for Hanover, from 1755-1758; and for Suffolk, from 1749¹⁰¹ 1758. These total extant records form the basis for our study of the life of the presbyteries during the schism.

1. Authority exercised over ministers

In spite of their vacillation prior to the formation of the Synod of New York, the Presbytery of New Brunswick found, when faced with matters calling for church authority, that that control had to be exercised if any order were to be maintained. This was especially true with regard to its ministers.

Immediately after the schism, the presbytery was confronted with a case of ministerial discipline. At its June 23 meeting in 1741 New Brunswick found John

⁹⁹ Records, p. 219.

¹⁰⁰ Ibid., p. 214.

¹⁰¹ The minutes for Suffolk for 1747 and 1748 are extant, but this presbytery did not become a part of the synod until 1749. Cf. Supra, pp. 225-226.

Cross guilty of "very detestable and unclean Speech & Carriage" in relation to a young woman in his congregation,¹⁰² and he was temporarily suspended from the ministry. Two months later the presbytery found that he had been "dealing" with another young woman;¹⁰³ he was deposed and later was refused reinstatement.¹⁰⁴

As in the earlier periods since the founding of the original Presbytery, the presbyteries were the recognized bodies to grant admission of a minister to a church within their bounds, as well as to examine, ordain, install, and dismiss a minister.

a. Trials for ordination

Occasionally¹⁰⁵ a candidate would transfer from the care of one presbytery to another, but normally a young man would make application to the presbytery in which he lived or hoped to serve, and would complete all his trials with that body.

Probably the most extensive trials in the entire period were those given to John Martin by the Presbytery of Hanover. On March 18, 1756 he presented himself for trials. He delivered a discourse on Ephesians 2:1 and then was examined in: his religious experience, his reasons for desiring to become a minister, Latin, Greek, logic, ontology, ethics, natural philosophy, rhetoric, geography, and astronomy. The presbytery then assigned him a sermon on I Corinthians 1:22f. and a Latin exegesis on "Num Revelatio Supernaturalis sit Necessarias?"¹⁰⁶ He was given a month to make his preparations, at which time these parts of trial were to be presented to a committee appointed for the purpose.

¹⁰² Mss. minutes, Presbytery of New Brunswick (hereafter, in this chapter, New Brunswick), I, p. 26.

¹⁰³ New Brunswick, I, pp. 28-29.

¹⁰⁴ Cf. Supra, p. 127.

¹⁰⁵ Cf. the case of Henry Martin, Infra, p. 263.

¹⁰⁶ Mss. minutes, Presbytery of Hanover, Vol. I (hereafter, in this chapter, Hanover), p. 7.

When the committee met, Martin delivered the sermon and the exegesis and was examined further, in Hebrew, theology, and some "Cases of Conscience".¹⁰⁷ Upon the assignment of the committee, Martin, in July, preached a sermon on Galatians 2:30 and delivered a lecture on Isaiah 61:1-3. These being sustained, he was appointed for the following meeting of presbytery, a sermon on I John 5:10a. The presbytery met again on August 25, and in addition to this sermon Martin was asked extemporary questions "upon various Branches of Learning". He subscribed the Westminster Symbols and was licensed, and the moderator of the Presbytery, Samuel Davies, gave Martin some "Solemn Instructions and Admonitions, with regard to ye Discharge of his office".¹⁰⁸

But so far Martin was only licensed, not yet ordained. He preached for nearly a year in Hanover's vacancies and, at the meeting of the presbytery in June, 1757, delivered the opening sermon and presented a second exegesis. Later, during the same meeting, he was ordained,¹⁰⁹ after fifteen months and nearly twenty-five parts of trial.

Apart from its extent, one unusual feature of Martin's examination was the inclusion of Hebrew. The minutes of the presbyteries generally make reference, during candidates' trials, to an examination in the "languages" or "learned languages", referring to Latin and Greek.¹¹⁰ Nowhere else is Hebrew mentioned during this period.

When the Presbytery of Donegal hears Joseph Tate preach his "popular sermon" in 1748 as part of his trials they approve the effort. But the observation is made

¹⁰⁷ Hanover, p. 8.

¹⁰⁸ Ibid., p. 12.

¹⁰⁹ Ibid., p. 18.

¹¹⁰ Cf. New Brunswick, I, p. 96.

that while it is true that "the Apostle Paul has said to save ourselves & others, & to Spend & be Spent, & was never Accounted an Arminian by Calvinists [nevertheless] at the same time we caution Mr Tate not to use such uncommon comparisons...[which are] not familiar to ye People".¹¹¹ Tate is also found at fault for saying that men should work to eliminate their sins one by one. The presbytery believes that we cast all our sins on the Lord at the same time; therefore, we "order Mr Tate not to use such wrong expressions for the future". But, as a whole, the court is satisfied that Tate is "sound in ye faith, Notwithstanding a lame or corrupt expression dropt from him, which the best Divines are liable to".¹¹²

While the vast majority of candidates were in their early twenties, the Presbytery of Suffolk had occasion to receive as candidates two older men. In August of 1749 a Dr. Cook of Bridgehampton, Long Island indicated to the presbytery that he desired to be directed in studies that would qualify him for the ministerial office. The presbytery proceeded to examine him in Latin and Greek and theological questions and advised him to continue his studies under the direction of one of the ministers.¹¹³

This same presbytery received as a candidate, in 1754, Abner Reeve.¹¹⁴ Reeve at one time had been a candidate for the ministry (as a Congregationalist), but had fallen under the influence of liquor; he was now about forty-five years of age.¹¹⁵ After a candidacy and trials that lasted thirteen months Reeve was ordained.

The passing of trials for licensing and ordination was not a cut-and-dried affair.

¹¹¹ Mss. minutes, Presbytery of Donegal, Vol. I. (hereafter, in this chapter, Donegal), p. 307.

¹¹² Donegal, p. 308.

¹¹³ Mss. minutes, Presbytery of Suffolk, Vol. I. (hereafter, in this chapter, Suffolk), pp. 20-21. Unfortunately, his name is not mentioned again.

¹¹⁴ Suffolk, p. 44.

¹¹⁵ Webster, op. cit., p. 668.

Samuel Harker (Cf. Supra, p. 217) was examined by the Presbytery of New Brunswick in December of 1749 and sustained in some parts of the trial, but "finding him defective in Some other of them" the presbytery instructed him to do further study in Greek and Latin and "Especially in divinity" until the next meeting. To help him in his studies the presbytery gave him a grant of £6.¹¹⁶ The following May, Harker was back,

& having Examined him in various Parts of Learning & divinity [the presbytery] do upon the whole unanimously declare that they do not look upon him qualified for a Preacher of the Gospel & therefore cannot in Conscience & duty to God & Consistent with the Trust committed to them with Regard to the Churches of Christ encourage his Proceedance in that affair.¹¹⁷

Yet one year later Harker appeared again, asking to be re-examined, and this time the court was pleased and found itself "so far satisfied in his Proficiency".¹¹⁸ He was assigned more parts of trial and was ordained in October of 1752.¹¹⁹

For an unrecorded reason, the Presbytery of New Brunswick stated two years later, at its May 1754 meeting, that

taking into serious Consideration ye vast Importance of being supplied with a truly faithful as well as able Ministry, in order to promote this Design do Unanimously determine, yt they will not (ordinarily) admit Persons upon Trials, as Candidates for the Ministry without preliminary Conversation with them; nor yet without their being well certified for.¹²⁰

b. Ordination and installation

Twenty-six men were ordained by the six presbyteries during the period covered by the records. Donegal ordained one minister sine titulo,¹²¹ while on the New

¹¹⁶ New Brunswick, I, pp. 128-129.

¹¹⁷ Ibid., pp. 137-138.

¹¹⁸ Ibid., p. 172.

¹¹⁹ Ibid., p. 200.

¹²⁰ Ibid., p. 219.

¹²¹ Donegal, p. 234.

Side the Presbytery of New Brunswick ordained four in this fashion, ¹²² Suffolk two, ¹²³ and Hanover (in its only ordination) one. ¹²⁴ Of the six presbyteries, only the Presbytery of New Brunswick made extensive use of committees to perform ordinations, ¹²⁵ although a number of its ordinations were handled by the full presbytery.

By this period the practice and recording of installations was without exception. Sometimes the installation was executed by a full committee, ¹²⁶ on other occasions by a single minister sent by his presbytery. ¹²⁷ Apparently none was performed by an entire presbytery. Of the seven installations conducted by the Presbytery of New Brunswick during the period four were handled by committees of up to six members, ¹²⁸ three by individual ministers.

Services of installation were conducted by appointment of a presbytery not only for newly-ordained candidates or ministers moving from one parish to another within a single presbytery, but also for ministers who transferred from other presbyteries. Thus, when Joseph Lamb was received by the Presbytery of New Brunswick from the Presbytery of New York in May of 1744, New Brunswick immediately ordered his

¹²² New Brunswick, I, pp. 28, 65, 175.

¹²³ Suffolk, pp. 43, 60.

¹²⁴ Hanover, p. 18. This was a decided change from the previous practice (Cf. Supra, p. 117) of ordination only to a particular charge; but following the reunion of 1758 the earlier procedure regained favor in the Synod.

¹²⁵ Cf. Infra, p. 259, n. 230.

¹²⁶ Cf. Mss. minutes, Presbytery of Abington (hereafter, in this chapter, Abington), p. 46; Donegal, p. 241; New Brunswick, I, p. 100.

¹²⁷ Cf. Hanover, p. 26 and New Brunswick, I, pp. 56-57.

¹²⁸ Cf. New Brunswick, II, p. 6.

installation two months later as pastor of the congregation that had called him,¹²⁹ and the fulfilment of this appointment was reported at the next meeting, in September.¹³⁰

Installation was regarded, as in earlier periods, as part of the service of ordination when it took place in the ordinand's congregation. The presbytery of Abington met at Newtown, Pennsylvania on April 9, 1754, where "with fasting prayer and imposition of hands they set [Henry Martin] apart to the Gospel ministry at Newtown and Salisbury".¹³¹ It is evident that the act of installation was implied in the words "at Newtown and Salisbury", but the same presbytery made the action more explicit when it met to ordain William Ramsey in his prospective charge. He was ordained, and "At the same Time also the Pry Installed Mr Ramsey over the Congregation".¹³²

Installation was performed even in churches located far into the frontier country. A group from North Carolina sent a petition to the Presbytery of Hanover in April, 1758, requesting that Alexander Creaghead become their pastor. Creaghead, who already was itinerating on the frontier, sent word to the presbytery that he was willing to take charge of the people and that he wished a minister to install him.¹³³ John Martin,¹³⁴ who ministered to Indians on the frontier at the time, was appointed

¹²⁹ New Brunswick, I, p. 61.

¹³⁰ Ibid., p. 65.

¹³¹ Abington, p. 47.

¹³² Ibid., p. 80.

¹³³ Hanover, p. 24.

¹³⁴ Martin did not fulfill the appointment, and at the next meeting William Richardson was appointed to make the installation, in the name of the presbytery. Cf. Hanover, p. 10a.

to preside at the service of installation, "at such Time as best suits them both".¹³⁵ Because of the frontier conditions the presbytery wisely refrained from specifying a particular date.

On three occasions installations were delayed. When Daniel Lawrence was called to a congregation within the bounds of the Presbytery of Abington the presbytery found that none of its members "can conveniently" make the journey at that time. This was in May of 1753;¹³⁶ Lawrence finally was installed by a committee of the presbytery in June of the following year.¹³⁷

Timothy Allen, who formerly had participated with Davenport in the excesses of the Great Awakening,¹³⁸ joined the Presbytery of New Brunswick in October of 1748. Receiving a call presented to the presbytery by the people of Hopewell and Maidenhead, he indicated "his willingness to accept it" but asked that an appointment for his installation be postponed until the next meeting of presbytery. This was granted.¹³⁹ But at subsequent meetings Allen continued to ask the presbytery to defer a formal installation,¹⁴⁰ and at the end of the minutes for the October, 1752 meeting it was recorded: "N.B. at this Presby. Mr. Allen was dismiss'd to the Presby. of New York".¹⁴¹ Therefore, Allen had served for exactly four years as a resident supply preacher to this congregation, resisting a formal installation.

¹³⁵ Hanover, p. 26.

¹³⁶ Abington, p. 16.

¹³⁷ Ibid., p. 46.

¹³⁸ Cf. Webster, op. cit., pp. 583-585.

¹³⁹ New Brunswick, I, pp. 107-108.

¹⁴⁰ Ibid., pp. 138, 165, 181.

¹⁴¹ Ibid., p. 199.

Why the Presbytery of New Brunswick let this situation continue is not clear, but in the Hopewell and Maidenhead congregation, it certainly was faced with a most rancorous and intransigent group. Exactly one year after Allen left, the presbytery received his old friend Davenport from the Presbytery of New Castle (New Side), "upon Condition of his Settlement at Maidenhead & Hopewell".¹⁴² With his acceptance of the call, a committee of five ministers was appointed at once to perform his installation; the presbytery wanted no further delays in settling this congregation.

But the following May, in 1754, the committee reported that while it "met on the Spot" at Maidenhead and Hopewell in December for the installation, "finding Things not ripe for Settlement, through ye manifest Neglect of the People, could not proceed in that Affair".¹⁴³ At this same meeting representatives from the church indicated sorrow for the people's action and renewed their call to Davenport. After some persuasion he again accepted it, and another committee was appointed for his installation, which took place the following October.¹⁴⁴ Wisely, the presbytery disciplined the congregation for its action (Cf. Infra, pp. 250-251).

c. Dismissal

The presbyteries during this period showed a strong control over ministers wishing to be dismissed from their pastoral charges. The minister would make his request, generally for purposes of removing to another presbytery,¹⁴⁵ or of having

¹⁴² Ibid., p. 207. Davenport had once before been a member of New Brunswick, having been received in May of 1746 (p. 81) and then dismissed to the Presbytery of New York in May of 1748 (p. 101). During this two-year period he preached within the bounds of New Brunswick, under its supervision. Sometime between September 1751 and October 1753 (Cf. Records, pp. 244, 250) Davenport was dismissed from the Presbytery of New York to the Presbytery of New Castle (New Side) from which he found his way back into the Presbytery of New Brunswick in October of 1753.

¹⁴³ New Brunswick, I, p. 214.

¹⁴⁴ Ibid., pp. 214-215, 218.

¹⁴⁵ Ibid., p. 115.

the responsibility of one of several congregations removed from him.¹⁴⁶ There is evidence of only one pastor being dismissed from his charge in order to take another church in the same presbytery.¹⁴⁷ Very occasionally a minister would be removed from his pastorate at the request of his congregation.¹⁴⁸

A request for dismissal was never certain to gain presbyterial approval. The Presbytery of New Brunswick refused to take hasty action in response to Job Prudden's request that his pastorate at Milford, Connecticut be dissolved because of "lack of support".¹⁴⁹ Matters improved, and Prudden remained with the congregation. The same presbytery, in May of 1755, removed Samuel Kennedy from the pastorate of the Baskingridge, New Jersey church because of the congregation's failure to provide an adequate ~~manse~~ and salary. But the dismissal was only "conditional"; if the congregation fulfilled its obligations by the autumn meeting of the presbytery Kennedy was "still to be look'd upon as their minister". Otherwise, he was to be removed permanently from them "by Virtue of this Presbyterial Act".¹⁵⁰ Upon inquiry the following November, the presbytery found that Kennedy's congregation almost had fulfilled its obligations regarding "the first Four years of his Salary and ye Parsonage House".¹⁵¹ Because of this successful action of the presbytery Kennedy remained pastor.

But it was the Presbytery of Abington that exercised such control with the most

¹⁴⁶ Ibid., pp. 215-216.

¹⁴⁷ Gilbert Tennent, when he moved from New Brunswick to Philadelphia. Cf. New Brunswick, I, p. 54.

¹⁴⁸ Cf. Suffolk, p. 48.

¹⁴⁹ New Brunswick, I, p. 215.

¹⁵⁰ Ibid., pp. 231-232.

¹⁵¹ Ibid., p. 238.

fruitful results. Between 1753 and 1757 this presbytery received applications from four of its members to be released from their pastorates because of a lack of material support. When Benjamin Chestnut made this request at the May, 1753 meeting the presbytery sympathized: but, since there were no representatives of the congregation present to state their position, the matter was deferred until the following meeting. In the meantime, a copy of this minute was to be transmitted to the congregation.¹⁵² When a fuller light had been shed on the situation the presbytery did "liberate" Chestnut from his charge at the following meeting.¹⁵³ Requests also were received by this presbytery from Andrew Hunter¹⁵⁴ and Richard Treat¹⁵⁵ to be dismissed from their pastorates because of lack of support, but they both were refused. The presbytery worked with the two congregations to make certain that adequate support was provided. The difficulties passed, and the men remained with their people.

Finally, at the October, 1757 meeting, the Presbytery of Abington heard of difficulties between Henry Martin and his two charges, Newtown and Salisbury. It seems that he was to spend three-fourths of his time with Newtown, the larger congregation, and one-fourth with Salisbury. But representatives from Newtown indicated that they found it impossible to fulfill their financial responsibilities; and Salisbury was quite negligent in its part of the arrangement. Rather than remove him from his entire pastorate the presbytery dissolved Martin's pastoral relation

¹⁵² This was a normal practice in all presbyteries.

¹⁵³ Abington, pp. 19-20, 28. It is recorded that "The Presby do Judge, that Mr. Chesnutt is to blame in some part of his Conduct towards his People.....But they also Judge the other Charges to be without Foundation...specially the articles about the Psalms & his publick Proposing to pray for Divine Curses on the Congregation". (p. 29).

¹⁵⁴ Ibid., p. 21.

¹⁵⁵ Ibid., pp. 83-84.

with Salisbury and determined that "one half of his Time be continued to Newtown till our next Presbytery & the other half of his Time to be under the Direction of the Presbytery", in filling vacancies.¹⁵⁶ At the next meeting, in May of 1758, it was reported that the arrangement was working quite well; Newtown had provided an adequate manse and was making-up Martin's arrears in salary, and, therefore, the presbytery determined to leave him there for one-half of his time, supplying vacancies the remainder.¹⁵⁷

Only one instance of irregularity in leaving a charge is recorded in the minutes of this period; this was in the Presbytery of Suffolk, where, on November 3, 1756, it is entered that Azariah Horton, "having remov'd from us, for some considerable Time, settled in New-Jersey over a congregation under N. York Presbytery, and, as we hear, own'd as a Member of the Presbytery we shall drop his Name in these Records, and no longer mention him as a Member of this Presbytery".¹⁵⁸ Yet this irregular procedure on Horton's part can partially be understood, for he was not a settled pastor, but a missionary to Indians on Long Island, and therefore cut-off from regular contact with the presbytery.

d. Discipline

The findings in the cases of ministerial discipline judged by presbyteries in the period under consideration range from refusal to accept an excuse for absence at a meeting¹⁵⁹ to rulings regarding sexual immorality. There were four instances in the latter category; in addition to John Cross' case in the Presbytery of New Brunswick, two were in the Presbytery of Donegal and one in the Presbytery of

¹⁵⁶ Ibid., p. 87.

¹⁵⁷ Ibid., pp. 90-91.

¹⁵⁸ Suffolk, p. 51.

¹⁵⁹ New Brunswick, I, p. 213.

Philadelphia.

Five months after ordination and installation as minister at the Donegal congregation, Hamilton Bell ¹⁶⁰ is charged before the Presbytery of Donegal with illicit behavior with a Mrs John Stuart. Several witnesses appear and report to this April, 1743 meeting that Bell had been seen "coming out of Mrs Stuarts room one morning smoking his pipe". Bell has been seen kissing Mrs Stuart. Mrs Stuart is not present for this trial because she is "sick of the mother" (i.e. pregnant). ¹⁶¹ The presbytery makes the rather startling judgement that there are no grounds upon which "to judge that Mr Bell is Chargable with any immodest behaviour with Mrs Stuart", ¹⁶² but the following March a pro re nata meeting is called because of new "very scandalous reports". The presbytery hears extensive, and conclusive, testimony from a large number of people and proceeds to suspend Bell from the ministry. ¹⁶³

Five and a half years later, in September of 1749, the Presbytery of Donegal faced another case of alleged immorality. The presbytery discovered at its September 26 meeting that Samuel Thomson had been charged before a civil magistrate

¹⁶⁰ Bell probably was a graduate of Tennent's Log College. Trinterud, op. cit., pp. 333-334, n. 18, disagrees, stating that Webster is the only historian who holds to this "tradition". To the contrary, in addition to Webster, op. cit., p. 469, this position is taken by Gillett, E.H., History of the Presbyterian Church, etc., Philadelphia, 1873, Vol. I, p. 92 and Ingram, George H., "Biographies of the Alumni of the Log College," JPH, XIII, pp. 307-308. If Bell was not an alumnus of the Log College then Trinterud's case that the act requiring synodical examination of candidates (Cf. Supra, p. 176) was aimed only at Log College men is further disproved, for Bell presented himself to the Synod in 1739 for examination. Records, p. 149.

¹⁶¹ Donegal, pp. 254-256.

¹⁶² Ibid., p. 258. Cf. pp. 252-258 for the full account.

¹⁶³ Ibid., pp. 270-279. Trinterud, op. cit., p. 142, is wrong when he says that Bell's case was "dragged out for twenty-three months to the day" in the presbytery. From beginning to end it was eleven months. Trinterud, op. cit., p. 334, n. 19, gives as reference for his statement the minutes of the presbytery for April 6, 1742, imagining this to be the date of the opening of the matter. Actually, it was at this meeting that Bell, still just a candidate, subscribed to the Westminster Standards. Nothing was recorded regarding the scandal until April 1743.

with fornication. He was suspended from the ministry until the next meeting of presbytery, two months later. At that time he was cleared of the charge because of the irresponsible character of his accuser, Ann [Cathoy?]; thereupon he asked and received from the presbytery dismissal from his congregation. ¹⁶⁴

Over in the Presbytery of Philadelphia there was a quite unhappy ending for the early fellow-laborer of Francis Makemie. Jedidiah Andrews was still pastor at Philadelphia in 1746 when a scandal arose concerning him, and a meeting of the presbytery was called immediately for October 29. Here it was revealed that Andrews, seventy-two years old, had been discovered in a relatively compromising situation with a younger woman. With great repentance for his indiscretion Andrews wrote out a fully-detailed report of the incident for the presbytery. ¹⁶⁵ The judicature went into lengthy deliberation and the following day made the difficult decision to "suspend the sd Mr Jedidiah Andrews from the exercise of his ministry in all the parts of it. Concluded with prayer". ¹⁶⁶ This minute was recorded by the presbytery's clerk, Jedidiah Andrews. Not long after, he was restored; ¹⁶⁷ but within weeks Andrews was dead. ¹⁶⁸

1756 brought rumors to the Presbytery of Suffolk at its November meeting. There is trouble in the Bedford, Long Island congregation concerning the minister, Eliphalet Ball. The presbytery decides that it needs to be "upon the Spot" and

¹⁶⁴ Donegal, pp. 311-312. There is no mention of the outcome of the civil proceedings. Thomson remained a member of the Presbytery of Donegal for the rest of his life.

¹⁶⁵ Cf. Mss. minutes, Presbytery of Philadelphia (hereafter, in this chapter, Philadelphia), pp. 117-119.

¹⁶⁶ Philadelphia, p. 120.

¹⁶⁷ Webster, op. cit., p. 317.

¹⁶⁸ Records, p. 190. He died sometime before May 27, 1747.

calls its next meeting to convene there.¹⁶⁹ At Bedford, in May of 1757, the presbytery hears a parishioner, Sarah Miller, claim that Ball "had clandestinely taken and made use off[sic] some of her Fowls, that frequented his Barn". The presbytery does not seem to deny the charge, but rules that Sarah "had rashly, imprudently, and in an unchristian like Manner devulged her Jealousies of Mr Ball's taking and making use of her Fowls, that frequented his Barn". She is ordered to make public confession, which is written out for her by the presbytery. It begins:

I Sarah Miller do freely and humbly acknowledge and confess my Sin and Offence, in rashly and imprudently expressing and divulging my Jealousies of the Rev. Mr. Ball's taking and making use of some of my Fowls, by which I have dishonour'd God, [and] offended his People.....¹⁷⁰

This is the only recorded incident of such foul play by a minister.

Other charges were made against Ball by his people, and while most of them were found to be groundless,¹⁷¹ he was disciplined at one point. Finding that he had "forced the congregation" to vote to abolish ruling elders, the presbytery judged "that the Proceedure of Mr. Ball and the Church, in Voting out ruling Elders, is directly contrary to that Presbyterial Form of Government they are under.....And we do now Order and direct Mr. Ball and his Church to proceed to the Choice of a suitable number of ruling Elders...set[t]ing aside that act by which they were voted out of the Church".¹⁷²

Doctrinal concern did not escape the attention of the courts. The Presbytery of Suffolk sent a committee to a church to inquire into charges of heresy in the preaching of a young candidate there, but found nothing to substantiate the claim.¹⁷³

¹⁶⁹ Suffolk, p. 52.

¹⁷⁰ Ibid., p. 55.

¹⁷¹ Ibid., pp. 56-57.

¹⁷² Ibid., p. 57.

¹⁷³ Ibid., pp. 26-28.

The presbytery of New Brunswick found grounds for concern, though, in the preaching of Samuel Harker (Cf. Supra, pp. 217, 236). Hearing that he had been expounding "unsound Doctrines" the October, 1757 meeting investigated the situation and appointed a further meeting at Princeton in December to settle it. The moderator was instructed "to exhort Mr. Harker not to touch upon those controverted points, in the mean time, either in publick or private".¹⁷⁴ In December it was discovered that Harker had persisted in his opinions and "hath not testified, Such a sufficient Regard, to the Presbytery's Authority, as he ought to have done".¹⁷⁵ The case was referred to the Synod of New York the following spring and dragged on for five years following the reunion.¹⁷⁶

The Presbytery of Suffolk, in November of 1752, refused to make a binding statement with regard to a perennial ministerial problem. A layman of the Southampton congregation asked the presbytery "that every ordained Minister, belonging to this Body, might be enjoyn'd to make a religious Visit to every Family of his Charge at least, once in a year". The presbytery considered the man's request, "approve'd his Concern for the Advancement of Religion", and said that it surely is the duty of ministers to visit their people, "as well as for People to visit their Ministers". It was, though, for pastors to determine their own schedules for congregational visitation.¹⁷⁷

Presbyterial control over ministers was underlined by a decision of the Presbytery of Hanover in August, 1756. There was a request from a congregation for a minister to come to attempt to settle a difference between John Brown, the pastor and James

¹⁷⁴ New Brunswick, II, pp. 24-26.

¹⁷⁵ Ibid., p. 28.

¹⁷⁶ Records, pp. 283-284, 297, 301-302, 308, 315, 329-330.

¹⁷⁷ Suffolk, p. 35.

Callison, a communicant. But the presbytery ruled that Callison "must regularly enter his Complaint before ye Presbytery, before which alone it can be tried; as Mr. Brown is not subject to an inferior Judicature". ¹⁷⁸

The Presbytery of New Brunswick gave an interesting variation on this point of procedure. In May of 1749 a case came before the presbytery from the session of Joseph Lamb's church. There was difficulty between Lamb and two of his members, "& the Minister being one of the Parties they [Lamb and his session] think it will not be proper for the session to Judge in it." This is a fine impulse, said the presbytery, but unnecessary, seeing that Lamb is the one who is complaining against the members. Therefore, the session could determine in the affair. ¹⁷⁹

In January of 1758 the Presbytery of Hanover recorded that "Mr. [John] Wright having long laboured under a Disorder which is often exasperated by preaching: the Presbytery advise him to desist from the exercise of his office 'till May next; & they consider his Congregation as a Vacancy in the mean Time". ¹⁸⁰ It was only later that the meaning of this minute came to light. The "Disorder" from which Wright suffered was alcohol. ¹⁸¹

2. Authority exercised over congregations

a. Calls

The presentation of a congregation's call for a minister directly to his presbytery rather than to the minister personally had been a firmly established

¹⁷⁸ Hanover, pp. 12-13.

¹⁷⁹ New Brunswick, I, p. 117. But the presbytery did appoint a minister to meet with Lamb and his session to "assist them in hearing & Judging sd Affair".

¹⁸⁰ Hanover, p. 23.

¹⁸¹ Wright became intoxicated at a presbytery meeting the following year, Cf. Hanover, p. 28, and finally was deposed by the presbytery, Cf. pp. 51a, 54a-56a. Cf. also Thompson, Ernest T., Presbyterians in the South, Vol. I: 1607-1861, Richmond, 1963, p. 77.

practice as early as the original Presbytery. (Cf. Supra, p. 62). The presbyteries jealously guarded this responsibility and right and attempted to strengthen various aspects of it. More and more these judicatories were taking upon themselves the regulating of the terms of a minister's call, in order to insure that his material support would be sufficient; it was common practice for the Presbytery of Hanover to establish such terms. ¹⁸²

When the Moriches and Ketchabonock congregations on Long Island sought to call Abner Reeve, the Presbytery of Suffolk examined the call carefully. Finally, "having, upon inquiries made, obtain'd Satisfaction as to his Call and the People's Proposals and Engagements for his Support", the presbytery presented it to Reeve. ¹⁸³

Calls for ministers across presbytery boundaries were controlled by both presbyteries concerned. So in 1752 when the Tehicken church, under the care of the Presbytery of Abington, sought to call Robert Henry, a licentiate under the care of the Presbytery of New York, they asked for, and received, Abington's permission in advance. ¹⁸⁴ The congregation then sent representatives to the Presbytery of New York to ask that court's permission, but being unsuccessful in securing Henry, the people asked their presbytery later the same year for permission to call Henry Martin, then a candidate under the supervision of the Presbytery of New Brunswick. ¹⁸⁵ Having obtained this approval they secured Martin to preach as a candidate, although he finally declined settlement as their pastor.

When the Nottingham church in the Presbytery of Donegal desired to prepare a call for Francis McHenry, a minister in the Presbytery of Philadelphia, Donegal sent

¹⁸² Thompson, op. cit., p. 70.

¹⁸³ Suffolk, p. 47.

¹⁸⁴ Abington, p. 7.

¹⁸⁵ Ibid., p. 12.

Adam Boyd to the congregation to moderate its drafting. Then Nottingham asked the Presbytery of Donegal for permission to prosecute the call to McHenry in the Presbytery of Philadelphia. Approval was given, and not only was a representative of the Nottingham congregation sent to the Philadelphia meeting, but Donegal appointed Boyd to attend also.¹⁸⁶ At Philadelphia the call was presented to the presbytery, reviewed, approved, and then handed to McHenry for consideration, but a representative of the Deep Run congregation, which McHenry had been serving, opposed the move before the presbytery, and McHenry was given until the next meeting to decide.¹⁸⁷ Such presbyterial control and care was both wise and helpful, and a great deal of possible misunderstanding was avoided.

The Presbytery of Hanover received a call in April of 1758, submitted for Henry Patillo by three small united congregations. The presbytery agreed to Patillo's taking the call under consideration, "but with this Limitation, that he do not accept it before our next Presbytery have an opportunity of seeing whether the way be clear for so doing".¹⁸⁸ Patillo was a candidate with trials still to be approved before he could be ordained, and the presbytery prudently restrained him from making any 'promises' to these congregations that possibly might not be able to be fulfilled.

A final illustration of the presbyterial supervision of congregational calls is in the case of James Davenport. In October, 1753, prior to Davenport's intended installation at Maidenhead and Hopewell by the Presbytery of New Brunswick, it was noted that the call to him provided for a salary of £65 per annum. The presbytery "do recommend" to the congregation that within five years they raise this to £70.¹⁸⁹

¹⁸⁶ Donegal, p. 248.

¹⁸⁷ Philadelphia, p. 112. The call was refused.

¹⁸⁸ Hanover, pp. 24-25.

¹⁸⁹ New Brunswick, I, pp. 208-209.

Upon the failure of the installation (Cf. Supra, p. 240) the presbytery had new thoughts in the matter. Because of the attitude of the people, before the presbytery would permit Davenport to be installed, they "do order" the church to advance the salary to £70 two years sooner than formerly was recommended. ¹⁹⁰

b. Care of ministers

It was a growing conviction that presbyterial action was necessary and proper in order to insure that the terms of congregational calls were fulfilled. It appears to be the rule rather than the exception that churches were delinquent in the payment of salaries to their pastors. Indeed, occasionally the arrears covered years rather than months, and adequate housing was also a vital concern. These conditions effected the New Side presbyteries to a far greater extent than the presbyteries in the Synod of Philadelphia. The revivalists had formed a number of new congregations, but the individualistic zeal of the Great Awakening did not seem to produce an equal commitment of the individuals' pocketbook. This, combined with the general poverty of the colonial people, produced situations that did not often arise in the more established churches in the Old Side presbyteries.

Having faced problems of arrears in its ministers' salaries, ¹⁹¹ the Presbytery of Abington devised a general scheme in 1757. The presbytery, "having understood that there are considerable Deficiencies in Some of the Congregations belonging to their Body" did

exhort all their Congregation[s] to Settle and as soon as they can make up their deficiencies to their Ministers both with respect to annual Salary & other Agreements. And the Presbytery doth Judge it to be their Duty to inspect into this Matter at least once in a year. And do therefore appoint every Congregation to bring into their next Spring Presbytery an account of the true State of their Case with respect to their Minister, that a proper record be made thereof in their Presbytery Book. ¹⁹²

¹⁹⁰ Ibid., pp. 218-219.

¹⁹¹ Cf. Supra, pp. 241-2 and Abington, p. 18.

¹⁹² Abington, pp. 82-83.

The next May, at its final meeting,¹⁹³ the presbytery listed six congregations which were "either clear of any Demands in Point of Arrears or in a Way to get them made up". Also listed were four others, in arrears to their ministers for a total of £218.¹⁹⁴

The Presbytery of New Brunswick had been forced to take similar action as a means to ensure its ministers' support. In November of 1750 an unnamed ruling elder moved that it be ordered that at least once a year elders be examined by the presbytery as to "how their respective Ministers are supported & their Salaries paid them". Not only was the proposal approved, but it was added "that a like Inquiry be made of the Commissioners from the several vacancies respecting their Supplies".¹⁹⁵ When elders were questioned at subsequent meetings the presbytery found most, if not all, its congregations "very defective"¹⁹⁶ and "greviously deficient",¹⁹⁷ although there was definite improvement.¹⁹⁸ For unknown reasons the presbytery ceased the practice in 1755.¹⁹⁹ Although the Presbytery of Suffolk did not institute a similar plan, on two occasions it ordered churches to make up their deficiencies.²⁰⁰

One case of a minister claiming arrears due from his congregation had a surprise

¹⁹³ This presbytery was dissolved at the reunion.

¹⁹⁴ Abington, p. 92.

¹⁹⁵ New Brunswick, I, pp. 155-156.

¹⁹⁶ Ibid., p. 163.

¹⁹⁷ Ibid., p. 235.

¹⁹⁸ Ibid.

¹⁹⁹ Ibid., pp. 240-241.

²⁰⁰ Suffolk, pp. 45, 46-47.

ending. After Timothy Allen was dismissed to the Presbytery of New York (Cf. Supra, p. 239), he began corresponding with the Presbytery of New Brunswick. Hopewell and Maidenhead had never fulfilled their financial obligation to him, he said, and he wanted New Brunswick to see that the arrears were paid. The matter continued for four years, and the presbytery, anxious to see the affair settled, even appointed a committee to meet with the people and Allen.²⁰¹ When final determination was made in 1756 it was revealed that the congregation "have overpaid Mr. Allen three pounds, nine shillings and five pence halfpenny".²⁰²

The presbyteries' zeal in the financial care of its ministers, which even extended to the ordering of a congregation to pay for its new minister's moving expenses,²⁰³ was a valuable assurance that a pastor's support would not be left to the mercy of a negligent people.

c. Supplies

A vacant church was dependent upon its presbytery for the appointment of supply preaching. The Presbytery of Philadelphia which, as we have noted (Cf. Supra, p. 150), devolved much of its business onto the Synod of Philadelphia, found only one reason for holding its stated meeting in May of 1745. At the opening of the presbytery it was recorded that "The following Members of the Presbytery of Philada met there [at Philadelphia] to appoint Supplies".²⁰⁴ Even when there was other business to transact, it was not unusual for a presbytery to devote most of a meeting to this task.²⁰⁵

The number of assignments often was extensive. To cover a five month period

²⁰¹ New Brunswick, I, p. 250.

²⁰² Ibid., II, p. 2.

²⁰³ Ibid., I, p. 200.

²⁰⁴ Philadelphia, p. 116.

²⁰⁵ Cf. New Brunswick, I, pp. 34-37.

the Presbytery of New Brunswick, in 1748, assigned to ten ministers and candidates well over forty preaching engagements.²⁰⁶ For the four months before its following meeting the Presbytery of Abington designated in May of 1752, over twenty preaching assignments for seven different congregations within its bounds, the appointments being made to six of the presbytery's seven resident pastors.²⁰⁷ While specific assignments generally were made, occasionally it was recorded that all pastors were appointed to preach as often as they were able in adjacent vacancies, or, perhaps,²⁰⁸ "to preach one Sabbath in some vacant Congregation between this & ye next Presbytery".

The difficulties of travel in order to fulfill such appointments put a great burden on many ministers. It was inevitable that some of the settled congregations would feel the drain on their pastors' time, and it is not surprising to find the session of Samuel Davies' church requesting the Presbytery of Hanover in 1758 that Davies "might be exempted from supplying any of the vacancies in their bounds, unless his Congregation be provided for in his Absence [by the presbytery]".²⁰⁹ After "mature Deliberation" the presbytery agreed to relieve him only of half his usual assignments.²¹⁰

The Presbytery of Donegal continued its work as the center for Old Side missions in Virginia, while the New Side coordinated its efforts in that colony with the establishment of the Presbytery of Hanover in 1755. Subsequently, Hanover began to reach out with supplies into the Carolinas. But the synods, especially the Synod

²⁰⁶ New Brunswick, I, pp. 102-103.

²⁰⁷ Abington, pp. 8-9.

²⁰⁸ Hanover, p. 14.

²⁰⁹ Ibid., p. 24.

²¹⁰ Ibid., p. 26. Upon this decision, Davies' ruling elder at the meeting, David Whitlock, entered an appeal to the Synod of New York.

of New York, took a certain amount of initiative in these southern mission fields (Cf. Supra, p.218).

Whenever possible, the presbyteries sought to have supplies requested by written petition; verbal application was frowned upon. Hanover said in March of 1756: "it is recommended to such Congregations as desire our Labours for the future, to send Petitions for that Purpose". ²¹¹

d. Discipline

While there is evidence of only one presbytery continuing the practice of regular congregational visitations, ²¹² the presbyteries exercised strict control over local members. For the most part, this was left to the sessions, since by this period most of the elderships had become well-organized and were responsible courts for church discipline. On a number of occasions, however, appeals were made to the presbyteries by local members or sessions. If these were not referred back to the session for determination ²¹³ decisive action was taken.

In the area of morals the presbyteries had occasion to judge in cases ranging from drunkenness ²¹⁴ to bigamy. ²¹⁵ The Presbytery of Suffolk faced a perennial question, that of the legality of a man's marrying his dead wife's sister. The judgment was that it "is unlawful and sinfull, and consequently that the married couple should, both of them, be bar'd from the Sacrament when it is administered, till the Matter of Scandal be remov'd". ²¹⁶ But cases dealing with personal morals

²¹¹ Hanover, p. 4.

²¹² Donegal, Cf. pp. 259ff.

²¹³ Cf. Ibid., p. 294.

²¹⁴ New Brunswick, I, pp. 244-245.

²¹⁵ Hanover, p. 7.

²¹⁶ Suffolk, p. 58.

appear surprisingly few times in the presbyterial records of the period, indicating, one would suspect, not so much an improvement in morals as an improvement in the function of church sessions.

The Presbytery of Abington heard from one John Blackwood in May, 1756. He had been hired by his congregation to build their new meeting house, but very little had been paid him, and he was out a great deal of money. The presbytery decided to send one of its members to preach to the people about the matter and to try to "inculcate" in them the need to reimburse Blackwood.²¹⁷ This is an early indication of the difficulties involved in a church's contracting work with one of its own members.

Several cases arose of parishioners making ungrounded charges against their pastors.²¹⁸ When accusations were made against James McCrea in the Presbytery of New Brunswick²¹⁹ the presbytery determined to meet in his church. The next month, June of 1757, the court spent three days in investigation and found that the charges were groundless, and the members involved, who had acted "very disingenuously", were sharply rebuked.²²⁰

In October, 1749, Samuel Buell asked the Presbytery of Suffolk if a number of his communicants who had separated from the congregation under the ministry of his predecessor might be re-admitted to full communion. The presbytery ruled that all baptized persons are under the watch and care of the Church, "and so the subjects

²¹⁷ Abington, pp. 70-71.

²¹⁸ Cf. Ibid., p. 29 and New Brunswick, I, p. 157. In this later case an elder is spreading accusations against his minister. The presbytery orders that the elder will attend its next meeting and lay before it his charges, "according to the Rules of the Gospel & known Methods of Presbytery".

²¹⁹ New Brunswick, II, p. 13.

²²⁰ Ibid., pp. 18-19.

of ecclesiastical Discipline"; these people, therefore, must show repentance and make a confession. As was standard practice for this presbytery, it drew up the necessary words of confession: I now "renounce all such schismatical and divisive Principles, as were the Spring of my Separation".²²¹ On this basis only were they to be re-admitted to full communion.

Cases involving communicants from different parishes under the control of the same presbytery would naturally find their way to the presbytery. Thus, in November of 1756 the Presbytery of Suffolk heard an appeal from Dr Zophar Platt. Platt, a deacon in the Huntington church, was entering an appeal from a decision of the session of the Smithfield church. A certain Elnathan Wickes, deacon at Smithfield, had been spreading rumors about the Doctor's honesty. The Smithfield session had judged in favor of its deacon, and Platt proceeded in quite an orderly fashion, having notified Wickes that he was making the appeal to the presbytery. After thorough investigation, the court unanimously reversed the decision of the Smithfield session and found the Doctor not to blame. Because of the slander involved, Wickes was ordered to make public confession, again, composed by the presbytery.²²²

In one of the very few allusions in the presbyteries' records to the schism or its causes, the session of the Dozzy, Pennsylvania church presented a "reference" to the Presbytery of Donegal. It seems that two members of the congregation had accused the session and the pastor, William Bertram, of being faithless to the scriptural requirements for the office of ruling elder, by admitting James Ireland as a member of the session. It was reported that Ireland had uttered certain "expressions" to some church members he had seen going to hear an itinerant New

²²¹ Suffolk, pp. 22, 25. The presbytery here expounds a basic Presbyterian principle, as over against Congregationalism, in that all baptized Christians, and not just those immediately connected with a local congregation, are "subjects of ecclesiastical Discipline".

²²² Ibid., pp. 51-54.

Side preacher. Ireland had confessed his unguarded language, said the session; therefore we admitted him. Considering the entire case the presbytery ruled that the session did the only thing possible, given Ireland's repentance. Besides, said Donegal, "inasmuch as we all doe firmly believe that what he was bearing testimony ag[ains]t, is evidently contrary to the word of God & the true interest of Xts kingdom", certainly the session acted correctly. ²²³

More and more, as the civil government spread to the frontiers, many of the functions formerly handled by the presbyteries and local sessions devolved upon the government. ²²⁴ The presbyteries apparently were anxious to see developed within the church a proper respect for civil authority and did not desire to make judgements that naturally would fall to the civil courts, where these courts existed. Thus, when a member of Daniel Lawrence's congregation brought before the Presbytery of New Brunswick in 1751 a charge against his session and Lawrence himself, the presbytery judged that the matter was basically a civil one and should not be decided by a court of the Church. ²²⁵

3. Internal organization of the presbyteries

a. Commissions and Committees

Presbytery records show a total of thirty-six committees created during the period to carry out a wide range of duties. Even though its minutes cover the entire period, the Presbytery of New Brunswick's appointing of twenty-five committees ²²⁶ shows that it used this system to a greater extent than any of the others. The

²²³ Donegal, p. 261.

²²⁴ Klett, Guy S., Presbyterians in Colonial Pennsylvania, Philadelphia, 1937, p. 160.

²²⁵ New Brunswick, I, p. 171.

²²⁶ This does not include New Brunswick's occasional appointment of a single minister to install.

Presbytery of Abington appointed three, Suffolk three, Hanover three, Donegal two, and Philadelphia none.

The committees were composed of from three ²²⁷ to six ministers ²²⁸ and generally were assigned to install pastors, ²²⁹ ordain candidates, ²³⁰ or dissolve pastoral relationships. ²³¹ Only two committees were assigned to investigate the need for ministerial discipline. ²³²

While thirty-four of the committees were appointed by their presbyteries to meet prior to the next full meeting, only two were assigned to meet and report during a meeting. The Presbytery of Abington created a committee of three ministers to meet during its October, 1753 meeting in order to hear witnesses in a scandal case; these people had to be interviewed in their homes since they were too ill to attend the meeting. ²³³ On the only other occasion, the Presbytery of New Brunswick appointed a committee of three ministers during its November, 1755 meeting to deal with a "reference" which had been presented to the presbytery by a local session. ²³⁴ There were, then, no committees for "bills and overtures".

Ruling elders were never appointed as members of committees to examine or ordain candidates, nor for the installation of pastors. Yet there were instances ²³⁵ when a presbytery would appoint several ministers, along with one ruling elder each,

²²⁷ Cf. Hanover, p. 7.

²²⁸ Cf. New Brunswick, I, pp. 141-143.

²²⁹ Cf. Donegal, p. 241; Abington, p. 46; and New Brunswick, I, pp. 100, 174, 207, 218; II, pp. 9-10.

²³⁰ Cf. Suffolk, p. 58 and New Brunswick, I, pp. 59-60, 62, 80, 85, 93, 126-127, 152, 165, 193.

²³¹ Cf. Suffolk, p. 46 and New Brunswick, I, pp. 132, 205, 235.

²³² Suffolk, pp. 26-28 and New Brunswick, II, p. 19.

²³³ Abington, p. 38.

²³⁴ New Brunswick, I, p. 243.

²³⁵ Cf. Abington, p. 4 and New Brunswick, I, p. 106.

to act in cases of congregational discipline.

There is no mention in any of the presbytery records of a 'commission', but two of the courts used committees that can be considered in this category. The Presbytery of Donegal, in November of 1744, appointed its three missionaries in Virginia, John Thomson, Samuel Black, and John Craig, "to Act as a Committee in Ecclesiastical affairs" in that area, on the condition that the Committee make annual report to the presbytery of their proceedings.²³⁶ It is interesting that it was in the Presbytery of Hanover, also working in the frontier conditions of Virginia, that the other commission-like committee was formed; in this instance it was for the whole of the presbytery. The minutes for the August, 1756 meeting record:

As ye members are scattered so [that] they cannot often meet in stated Presbytery; nor be called pro re nata, the Presbytery appoint Messrs. Todd, Wright, Brown, and Davies, or any Two of them, a Committee for this year, to transact such Affairs as may not admit of a Delay 'till ye meeting of ye Presbytery, & they shall bring in an Account of their Proceedings to ye Presbytery.²³⁷

Generally the committees did not interpret their appointment as carrying with it the full power of presbytery, but occasionally a presbytery would specify what power was to be delegated. Thus, when establishing a committee in May of 1753 to investigate into the possible dismissal of Henry Martin to the Presbytery of Abington, New Brunswick stated that it did "empower the said Commit[t]ee to dismiss said Mr. Martin, if He desire it, and the way be clear for their so doing".²³⁸ The next year New Brunswick appointed a committee of five ministers to visit Job Prudden's congregation to review some difficulties; the presbytery did "fully empower ye aforesd Committee, if they find it needful...to dismiss Mr. Prudden from the pastoral Relation to his People, or to do any Thing else, which they may find necessary, to promote ye Glory

²³⁶ Donegal, p. 305.

²³⁷ Hanover, p. 13. This committee met twice the following year. Cf. pp. 19, 21.

²³⁸ New Brunswick, I, p. 205.

of God, with Respect to Mr. Prudden & his People". ²³⁹ Therefore, within the limits of the immediate situation, the committee was vested with full power to act. On other occasions ²⁴⁰ committees appointed by the Presbytery of New Brunswick acknowledged their limitation.

Attendance at meetings of committees was remarkably good, undoubtedly because the presbyteries would usually appoint members who lived in a close proximity to the assigned place of meeting. The presbyteries were sympathetic to valid excuses for absence. An understanding Presbytery of New Brunswick recorded in October of 1746: "the Committee appointed for Mr Hunter's ordination, make report...that they complied with the appointment, except Mr McKnight who was then about Marrying a wife & could not attend". ²⁴¹

b. Meetings

The extant minutes for the Old Side presbyteries show that the Presbytery of Donegal averaged four meetings a year, while Philadelphia averaged only two (in 1744, 1745, and 1746 holding only one meeting each year). Here is further evidence that Philadelphia began to put more and more of its business on the Synod of Philadelphia. On the New Side, the Presbytery of Abington averaged three meetings a year, Hanover five, New Brunswick three, and Suffolk between two and three.

Following is a chart showing the average number of ministerial members, their average attendance at presbytery, and the average attendance of ruling elders.

	<u>Donegal</u>	<u>Philadelphia</u>	<u>Abington</u>	<u>Hanover</u>	<u>New Brunswick</u>	<u>Suffolk</u>
Average number of ministers on roll	9	8	7	6	11	9

²³⁹ Ibid., p. 235.

²⁴⁰ Cf. Ibid., pp. 69, 146-148.

²⁴¹ Ibid., p. 84.

Average attendance of ministers	8 (89%)	5 (63%)	6 (86%)	4 (67%)	7 (64%)	5 (56%)
Average attendance of ruling elders	5	2	3	3	4	3

Taken as a whole, the ministerial attendance was 70% of total membership, while the attendance of ruling elders was 57% of its potential.²⁴² This is identical with the attendance percentage for elders during the period 1717-1740 (Cf. Supra, pp. 150-1). A comparison of the two charts shows that the overall attendance of ministers dropped slightly during the period 1741-1758. A comparison of the ministerial attendance of the three presbyteries whose records are extant during years in both periods shows Philadelphia unchanged, Donegal improved, and New Brunswick fallen off sharply.

4. Relations among the presbyteries

The presbyteries carried out their work with very little indication (written, at any rate) of the difficulties of the schism. Particularly on the New Side, the presbyteries had a certain amount of interchange and engaged cooperatively between meetings of the Synod. On a number of occasions one presbytery would ask another for the services of a minister or candidate to assist in the difficult task of supplying vacancies.²⁴³ There was, of course, the already-mentioned cooperation in the area of pastoral calls and settlement (Cf. Supra, pp. 249-250).

A definite attempt was made on the part of the presbyteries to keep from overlapping into the area of authority of the others. A call for John Todd, a missionary to Virginia from the Presbytery of Abington, was presented to that presbytery by the people of Hanover, Virginia in October of 1752. The area was new, and presbyterial supervision in these missionary outposts had not yet been established firmly; it

²⁴² Cf. Supra, p. 151, n. 126.

²⁴³ Cf. Abington, pp. 8-9 and New Brunswick, I, p. 43; II, p. 20.

was still three years before the formation of the Presbytery of Hanover. After considering the call, Abington decided that the "sd People [Hanover] are more immediately under the Care of the Presby of New-Castle [New Side]". Abington, therefore, dismissed Todd to that presbytery in order to have the call processed. ²⁴⁴

The Presbytery of Abington was asked on May 16, 1753 by the Newtown church to appoint Henry Martin to supply them "in order to Settlement". The presbytery said that it "cant make any Such Appointment in as Much as Mr. Martin is not under their Authority being a Candidate belong[ing] to the Presby of New-Brunswick". Besides, the presbytery was concerned about reports that Martin had not "acted regularly" with respect to another congregation he had been supplying. Therefore, the presbytery "can't see their Way clear to Imploy him to preach in their Vacancies, till the matter above be considered & Judged by the Presby to which he belongs or he [be] regularly dismissed from them & submitted to us". ²⁴⁵ Two weeks later the Presbytery of New Brunswick met, and Martin asked to be dismissed to the Presbytery of Abington. But a copy of Abington's minutes relating to the situation had been sent, and New Brunswick formed a committee to investigate the charges (Cf. Supra, p. 260). Five months later, at the next meeting of New Brunswick, the committee reported that Martin was not guilty; he, therefore, was dismissed as a candidate to the care of the Presbytery of Abington. ²⁴⁶

An interesting variation on the subject of inter-presbyterial relations is seen in two requests made to presbyteries from ministers outside the Presbyterian Church. The first was to the Old Side, to the Presbytery of Donegal. In April of 1742 a Mr Templeman, a "high German Calvinist" who for several years had been acting as a

²⁴⁴ Abington, p. 14.

²⁴⁵ Ibid., p. 19.

²⁴⁶ New Brunswick, I, pp. 204-205, 211-212.

self-appointed minister to German communities in Lancaster County, Pennsylvania, asked the presbytery to ordain him and allow him to become a member. But the court had received a letter from the Reverend Mr Licor, "a Calvinist Minister in Lancaster... cautioning us against the same [and] enforced with some reasons". The presbytery decided not to ordain and accept Templeman because he had been an "intruder into the sacred work and office of the ministry", and also because of the fact that since "there are other ministers of his own Chh. & nation, he ought rather to apply to them". ²⁴⁷

The second such request also was Teutonic and was directed to the New Side. The Synod, of New York had at its 1751 meeting referred a request (Cf. Supra, p. 225) from the Rockaway, New Jersey "High-Dutch congregation" to the determination of the Presbytery of New Brunswick. The congregation asked to be received as a member of the presbytery and to have a German, Conrad Wortz, who had been preaching to them, ordained and installed as their pastor.

Wortz was received by the presbytery as a candidate in October 1751, ²⁴⁸ and at the November meeting his trials were proceeding well when a letter was received from the German Coetus (under the control of the Dutch Church), entering some complaints against their countryman. Wortz professed sorrow to the presbytery, because of his misconduct, which was "sin against God and Offence to his Church". He confessed "administering the Ordinances of ye Gospel without being regularly set apart thereto". The presbytery considered this a "Suitable Retraction"; yet, "for promoting ye peace and Order of ye Churches", the court felt that it was its responsibility to communicate with the Coetus. A letter was composed and translated into Latin, ²⁴⁹

²⁴⁷ Donegal, p. 240.

²⁴⁸ New Brunswick, I, pp. 180-181.

²⁴⁹ Ibid., pp. 182-184.

and Wortz was ordered to attend a meeting of the Coetus to ask forgiveness and to present the presbytery's communication.

The following May Wortz appeared at the presbytery with a reply from the Coetus, which told the presbytery that the Germans had "received full Satisfaction from him with Regard to his former Proceeding...and do recommend him...under divine blessing".²⁵⁰ Though a great deal of effort and time were consumed, the presbytery acted with discretion, avoiding any misunderstanding with the Coetus and strengthening inter-denominational ties. Wortz was ordained in June.²⁵¹

Apart from the unfortunate reference in the minutes of the Presbytery of Donegal with regard to James Ireland (Cf. Supra, pp. 257-8) there is only one other mention of the schism in the presbyterial records. Happily, it is a very constructive one. In March, 1756 it is recorded in the minutes of the Presbytery of Hanover:

Some ministers of both Parties [Old Side and New Side] have come to this Agreement that when any Person in their respective Congregations, would desire to be, dismiss'd, & make the application for a Certificate, they should grant it, if the Person be otherwise a regular church-member.²⁵²

If such a spirit could gain control reunion would not be far distant.

C. Conclusions

During the period of separation the Log College conception of the Church and its order collapsed. Cut off from the main stream of the church's life and with the wind fast going out of the sails of the revival, the Tennent group re-entered by accommodating itself to the Dickinson-led men from New York. The point gained was that the

²⁵⁰ Ibid., p. 192.

²⁵¹ Ibid., p. 193. It is interesting to note that both Templeman and Wortz were guilty of the same offense: ministering without ordination. This is evidence of the inadequacy of the Dutch system, which had kept the Dutch and German churches under their control in the Classis of Amsterdam, and had refused ordination in the colonies for so long a time. Cf. Appendix I, pp. 355-358.

²⁵² Hanover, pp. 5-6.

majority in church courts could bind; it was a point never to be lost again during the colonial period. The Presbytery of New York had the concept of Church order that was lacking in the Tennent group, and combined with it the catholic spirit lacking in both the Tennents and the majority of the Old Side men.

In specific details of church organization, the Synods of Philadelphia and New York both continued Commissions, but used them quite sparingly, while the use of committees was extensive, and within prescribed bounds their judgements were binding. The involvement of the Synods in direct control of ministers and congregations grew much less than during the period from 1717-1740. The concept of the Synod as the 'presbytery of the whole' was still present, but as the presbyteries grew stronger much more was left in their corporate hands; the New Side synod's formation of the Presbytery of Hanover is illustrative of this point. In all, the Old Side presbyteries showed more reliance on their synod than the New Side presbyteries on theirs.

In spite of the great strains placed upon the life of the church by the schism, at no point can evidence be found of a slackening of presbyterial authority or control. Calls to ministers were always directed to presbyteries. Presbyteries faithfully carried out the practice of installation, even in the most remote areas. This service was a concrete indication to the local congregation of the breadth of church authority; it was a significant reminder that the local pastor was not basically local. His direct responsibility to the presbytery helped to keep intact the broader understanding of the oneness of the Church, under conditions that were particularly narrowing to that concept.

The presbyteries showed a new interest in guaranteeing proper living conditions for their members and pursued this interest with a singular authority and no small measure of success. Practical matters, such as systematized applications from congregations for supplies, show a maturing in the organizational functioning of the church. The strengthening of civil courts allowed the presbyteries to devote more time to matters relating directly to the church, and relations among ecclesiastical

judicatures, both within and beyond the Presbyterian Church, show a real striving toward order.

Because these tendencies cut across the division in the church, it soon was clear that the barriers to reunion involved not organization, but personalities. And if need and necessity were the godparents of certain practical changes in details of polity, nevertheless a reunited Presbyterian Church in America could and would come into being because of a commonly-held pattern--that ideal basis of Church polity that had shaped the denomination from its inception. The desire would be for "ye free Exercise of our Religion, according to ye Practice of ye established Church of Scotland". ²⁵³

²⁵³ In a letter of the Presbytery of Hanover, on August 25, 1756, to the new governor of Virginia. Hanover, p. 11.

CHAPTER EIGHT

Movement Toward Maturity, 1758-1788A. Polity at the reunion

A reunited Presbyterian Church met in Philadelphia on May 22, 1758. Throughout the period of separation there had been constant communication between the two synods, and reference to proposals for union are recorded almost each year in both sets of minutes.¹ The questions of itinerant ministers, the continuance of newly-erected New Side presbyteries and congregations, the extent of subscription to the Westminster Symbols, and Synodical examination of candidates were the problems faced in hammering-out a basis for reunion. In addition, the question of the Protestation of 1741 proved a major stumbling-block, was it to be affirmed, withdrawn, or simply ignored?

In the principles of union, it is stated that "since both Synods continue to profess the same principles of faith, and adhere to the same form of worship, government, and discipline, there is the greater reason to endeavour the compromising those differences, which were agitated many years ago with too great warmth and animosity, and unite in one body".² Thereupon, an eight-point plan is approved. First, the Westminster Symbols are reaffirmed: the Confession and catechisms are "an orthodox and excellent system of Christian doctrine, founded on the word of God". The Synod does "adhere to the plan of worship, government, and discipline, contained in the Westminster Directory, strictly enjoining it on all our members and probationers for the ministry.....".³ Here is further proof that the church had never veered from

¹ There is no mention of proposals for union in the records of the Synod of Philadelphia in 1747, 1748, or 1753; none in the records of the Synod of New York in 1747 or 1748.

² Records, p. 286.

³ Ibid. It is instructive to note that in this new adoption of the Westminster Symbols the 1729 option of submitting 'scruples' (Cf. Supra, p. 165) is abolished.

Westminster polity.

Second, decisions are to be determined by a majority vote and "every member shall either actively concur with, or passively submit to such determination". If a member's conscience is deeply offended by a judicial act, he may protest and then "peaceably withdraw from our communion, without attempting to make any schism". Third, the right of the orderly entering of protest is spelled-out, with qualifications; fourth, the Protestation is regarded as having been the action of private members of the Synod and not an official Act.⁴

The fifth point is crucial, for it states that it will be "esteemed and treated as a censurable evil" to make irresponsible public claims against another member's theology, abilities, or morals; such matters must be dealt with privately and, failing success, presented for an orderly judicial trial.⁵ The same attitude is to be taken toward any presbytery that appoints supplies within the bounds of another "without their concurrence".⁶ Nor may any member preach in another's congregation, "without asking and obtaining his consent, or the session's in case the minister be absent"; yet in "ordinary circumstances" it will be considered "unbrotherly" to refuse such a request from another member.

Sixth, the examination, licensing, and ordination of candidates are to rest with the presbyteries. Each candidate must "give them competent satisfaction as to his learning, and experimental acquaintance with religion, and skill in divinity and cases of conscience; and declare his acceptance of the Westminster Confession and Catechisms as the confession of his faith, and promise subjection to the Presbyterian plan of government in the Westminster Directory".⁷ The synodical examination of

⁴ Ibid.

⁵ Ibid., pp. 286-287.

⁶ Ibid., p. 287.

⁷ Ibid.

candidates is abolished, the former Old Side men being now satisfied that graduation from the College of New Jersey generally will satisfy the designs of that former requirement.⁸

The seventh point dealt with the remodeling of presbyteries and congregations,⁹ the matter essentially being left open, to see what effects the reunion would produce, as a matter of course, at the local level. The final article took up the question of the Revival, which for all intents and purposes had ended. While its good and lasting effects were affirmed,¹⁰ the excesses of revivalism were roundly rejected.¹¹

The following day the Synod moved to the matter of readjusting the presbyteries. Suffolk and New York remained unchanged, as did New Brunswick, with the addition to it of two former Old Side men, David Cowell and John Guild. Abington was dissolved and its members joined with three former Old Side ministers and nine former New Side ministers; this became a reshaped Presbytery of Philadelphia. A new presbytery, Lewes (or Leweston), was formed in Maryland and southern Delaware. Hanover was

⁸ Sweet, William W., Religion on the American Frontier, Vol. II, New York, 1936, p. 8, estimates that between 1758 and 1789 there were 120 graduates of the College of New Jersey who became ministers in the Synod. The Presbytery of New Brunswick stated in April of 1769 that in the year 1767 there "were not fewer than 80" graduates of the College of New Jersey who were serving as ministers throughout the colonies; "Since which Time there has been a considerable addition". Mss. minutes, Presbytery of New Brunswick, Vol. II (hereafter, in this chapter, New Brunswick), p. 313.

⁹ Funk, Henry D., "The Influence of the Presbyterian Church in Early American History," JPH, XII, pp. 53-58, lists nearly 350 congregations that had developed within the Synod since 1708.

¹⁰ Records, op. cit.

¹¹ The article states that "when persons seeming to be under a religious concern, imagine that they have visions of the human nature of Jesus Christ, or hear voices, or see external lights, or have fainting and convulsion-like fits, and on the account of these judge themselves to be truly converted, though they have not the Scriptural characters of a work of God above described [knowledge of their sinfulness and their absolute need for the help of God in Christ], we believe such persons are under a dangerous delusion. And we testify our utter disapprobation of such a delusion, wherever it attends any religious appearances, in any church or time". Records, pp. 287-288.

enlarged by the addition of three former Old Side men; the Presbyteries of Donegal, New Castle, and New Castle (New Side) were left unchanged for the moment.¹² Therefore, at the reunion the Synod consisted of nine presbyteries.

B. Internal organization of the judicatories

1. Synod

During the period from 1758 to 1788 the Synod of New York and Philadelphia made a conscious effort to consolidate the advances made in its organization, while struggling to avoid the flamm~~ing~~-up of old conflicts whose ashes only partially had been banked. The genius of American Presbyterianism lay in its empirical application of the forms of structure which were its direct inheritance from Westminster, by way of Scotland. Now that reunion was a fact, the church entered a crucial period, for the uses made of church order during these years would determine the final comprehensive spelling-out of an American Presbyterian polity.

a. The commission and committees

At the uniting Synod in 1758 it was ordered that "the commissions appointed before by the two Synods, with the present moderator, be together the commission of this Synod for the ensuing year".¹³ The use of a commission, first begun in 1720 (Cf. Supra, p. 104), continued throughout this period, until the formation of the General Assembly, retaining, as before, full synodical authority. There is record, though, of the commission's decisions being reviewed in 1770; John Ewing appealed from a decision of the commission to the Synod, which in part sustained, in part reversed, the commission's determinations.¹⁴

Two years later, when there was a request for the Synod to specify the exact

¹² The two Presbyteries of New Castle were merged the following year. Cf. Records, p. 292.

¹³ Records, p. 289.

¹⁴ Ibid., p. 407.

nature of the commission's authority,¹⁵ no action was taken, and in 1774 the request was renewed.¹⁶ The Synod resolved that the commission definitely should continue and established the number of commission members necessary to call it to meeting; further, "it shall be invested with all the powers of Synod to sit by their own adjournments from time to time". The Synod would not entertain any suggestion that the commission should be able only to give advice:

let it also be duly attended to, that there can lie no appeal from the judgment of the commission, as there can be none from the judgment of the Synod; but there may be a review of their proceedings and judgments by the Synod, and whensoever this is done, those who were members of the commission shall be present and assist in forming all such judgments as the Synod may think proper to make upon any such review.¹⁷

At the same time, in appointing the commission for the 1774-1775 term, the Synod increased its size considerably, probably in an effort to show its representative nature; while the 1773 commission was composed of eighteen ministers and six ruling elders, with a quorum of thirteen,¹⁸ now in 1774, it was increased to thirty ministers and eight ruling elders, with a quorum of twenty-two.¹⁹

The Synod's use of authoritative committees continued much the same as in earlier periods. The Committee on Bills and Overtures was active at each meeting, working behind the scenes in order that overtures and appeals might be channeled into the sessions in an orderly fashion. There was some fear, at least on the part of one member, that this committee might block certain pieces of business and keep them from reaching the floor of Synod. In 1768 this unnamed member asked the Synod whether the committee was to be considered "as agents and counsels, or....as judges?"²⁰

¹⁵ Ibid., pp. 426-427.

¹⁶ Ibid., p. 452.

¹⁷ Ibid., p. 459.

¹⁸ Ibid., p. 438.

¹⁹ Ibid., p. 459.

²⁰ Ibid., p. 381.

Determination was deferred until the following year, when the Synod stated that the committee did not have "power to suppress any thing that comes regularly before them from inferior judicatures according to our known rules.....".²¹ Therefore, the committee could refuse any matter that was not presented in an orderly way.

The Synod took a new interest in letter-writing. At its first meeting, in 1758, a committee of four ministers²² was appointed for the year "to correspond in the name of the Synod" with churches abroad and others in the colonies.²³ By 1766 the size of the committee had doubled, and the Synod that year approved a systematic plan for correspondence: all letters written by the committee were to be read before the full Synod for corrections or additions before being sent; in the same manner, all letters received from 'foreign' churches were to be read to the Synod. It is interesting to note with whom the Synod planned to correspond: "Holland, Geneva, Switzerland, the General Assembly of the Church of Scotland or their commission, the Synods of seceding ministers, the ministers in and about London, the General Synod of Ireland, and ministers of Dublin, New England, and the churches in South Carolina".²⁴ The order is not significant, but the distinction between "churches" on the one hand and individual "ministers" on the other is revealing. Whether consciously or not, the Synod showed that it did not recognize any regular church court in New England to which it could write, but merely individuals. In following years the letter-writing committees presented a large number of communications to

²¹ Ibid., p. 393.

²² They were the most influential in the Synod: Robert Cross and Francis Alison, former Old Side men, and Gilbert Tennent and Richard Treat, from the former New Side.

²³ Records, p. 290.

²⁴ Ibid., p. 356.

the Synod for approval.²⁵

As in the earlier periods, there was extensive use of pro re nata committees both during and between the meetings of Synod. But the Synod did not hesitate to reverse their decisions if the need was felt.²⁶

b. Rules of procedure

The necessity of internal organization went beyond the appointing of a commission and committees; the meetings of the Synod itself were in need of a definite set of practical procedural regulations. Thus a committee of three ministers was appointed at the 1760 meeting to lay a proposal for such rules before the court, and reported back seven days later, the Synod still being in session. There were eight points, specifying the necessity for neutrality on the part of the moderator, the orderly participation in and attention to debate by the members, and the censures to be imposed for acting contrary to these stipulations.²⁷ The rules were then suggested to the presbyteries as possible aids in the conduct of their meetings.

Five "queries" were presented at this meeting for the Synod's determination. The first was answered immediately, the second the following year, and the other three in 1764. Only the first two have relevance to the procedure of the courts. To the first question, the Synod said that pro re nata meetings of Synod and presbyteries should be called only because of the emergence of some important matter "unknown at their last meeting" which cannot wait until the next stated session. Such meetings might be called by the moderator himself or upon the request of two members.²⁸

²⁵ Cf. Ibid., pp. 399, 453.

²⁶ Cf. Ibid., p. 392.

²⁷ Ibid., p. 304.

²⁸ Ibid., p. 305. The Synod made it clear in 1776 that its moderator did not have authority, under normal circumstances, to change the date of a stated meeting of Synod. Ibid., p. 472. But he had much more authority than a mere parliamentarian, since he was also moderator of the Synod's commission.

The ruling on the second point came the next year, when the Synod stated that presbyteries were not required to elect a new moderator each time they met: "the presbyters may elect the same person for their moderator from time to time, if they think proper".²⁹

c. Attendance

The Synod took action on several occasions in order to gain better attendance at its meetings. As the court's membership grew larger, the percentage of ministers and ruling elders at its annual meetings grew smaller. During this thirty-one-year period there was an average each year of 145 ministers on the Synod's roll, with an average of only thirty-seven ministers and nine ruling elders present. Ministerial attendance, therefore, was twenty-six per cent of its potential, while the ruling elders' attendance was twenty-four per cent of the ministers present. Even allowing for the understandably small number that could attend during the years of the War of Independence,³⁰ the Synod was hampered by absenteeism. Even during these Revolutionary days the Synod appealed for more faithful attendance, and in 1778, during one of the most severe periods of the War, called non-attendance "a criminal neglect..., a forgetfulness of...[the] ordination obligation, and a want of...public spirit.....".³¹

Three years later, in 1781, noting the poor attendance at church judicatories, especially at its own meetings,³² and, most particularly, that of ruling elders, the

²⁹ Ibid., p. 310.

³⁰ From 1776-1781 there was an average of about 160 ministers on the Synod's roll, with an average of twenty-three ministers and four ruling elders present each year. This means that ministerial attendance was fourteen per cent of its potential, while ruling elders' attendance was seventeen per cent of the ministers present.

³¹ Records, p. 481.

³² Attendance at presbyteries had fallen sharply, especially during the War years; but it was much higher than the synodical average. A review of several presbyteries which were operative during the period under review produces the following statistics:

	<u>Hanover</u>	<u>Philadelphia</u>	<u>Donegal</u>	<u>New Castle</u>	<u>Suffolk</u>
Average number of ministers on roll	13	13	23	15	12

Synod suggested a plan for "defraying the expenses of ministers and elders". The presbyteries were to propose a collection in each congregation for the purpose; further, they were to take "every proper measure to excite their members to attend" the meetings. ³³

The sheer size of the Synod produced the difficulties in attendance. The more the church spread out, away from the normal meeting-place of Philadelphia, ³⁴ the more difficult or nearly impossible it was for large numbers of ministers and elders to be present. Those members in the 'frontier' presbyteries would be expected to show the poorest record of attendance at meetings of the Synod. They did. In 1785 the Synod directed a letter to the four presbyteries on its circumference (Hanover, in Virginia; Orange, in North Carolina; Suffolk, on Long Island; and Dutchess, in upstate New York), directing them to be present. ³⁵ In the eighteen years from 1771 to 1788 the Presbytery of Hanover was completely absent from the Synod twelve times, Orange and Dutchess each fourteen times, and Suffolk sixteen times. Some of the distant presbyteries systematically attempted to elect two or three of their members

Average attendance of ministers	7 (54%)	7 (54%)	14 (60%)	8 (53%)	6 (50%)
Average attendance of ruling elders	3	2	7	4	3

³³ Records, p. 491.

³⁴ The Synod met in Philadelphia all but five years: Elizabethtown, New Jersey in 1764; New York City in 1766, 1770, and 1775; and Bedminster, New Jersey (due to the War) in 1778. With regard to the length of meetings, the Synod met for two days once, three days five times, four days twice, seven days six times, eight days five times, nine days five times, ten days five times, thirteen days once, and for two full weeks once.

³⁵ Records, p. 509.

to represent them at Synod,³⁶ but this procedure was unsatisfactory. As the church grew rapidly, it became increasingly clear that the structure would have to be adapted; some type of representative general assembly was necessary.

2. Presbyteries

a. Committees

Committees were used in the presbyteries much in the same way as during the earlier periods. None of the presbyteries had a 'Commission', but a number had 'Standing Committees' which served the same purpose. These committees generally were constituted to make appointments to ministers, and candidates, who might come from outside of the bounds of presbytery between meetings and had the responsibility of checking the credentials of these men and determining whether or not they should be allowed to preach in vacant churches.³⁷ The minutes of the Presbytery of New Brunswick are typical:

Inasmuch as our vacant Congregations are sometimes embarrassed and hindered, in the Interims of Pby's, in making Application to Ministers or Candidates whom they may judge suitable for them, belonging to other Presbyteries, for Want of the Liberty & concurrence of their own Pby; and also as they are in Danger of being imposed upon, by irregular & disorderly Men coming among ym. from a Distance, under the Name of Ministers: Therefore to prevent these Evils & Inconveniences, We appoint.....a standing Committee....to give them [i.e. vacancies] Liberty of making Applications to Ministers or candidates out of our Bounds in the Intervals of Presbyteries, and to inspect the Certificates of any such Minister or Candidate....and the Pby hereby declare that it will be esteem'd irregular & disorderly in any of our Vanancies to make Application to any Minister or Candidate out of our Bounds as a Candidate for Settlement or stated Supply, or to employ him as such, withst Liberty first obtained from the Pby, or their standing Committee.

³⁶ Cf. Mss. minutes, Presbytery of Suffolk, Vol. I (hereafter, in this chapter, Suffolk), p. 88; Mss. minutes, Presbytery of Hanover (hereafter, in this chapter, Hanover), II, p. 182; Minutes, Presbytery of South Carolina (hereafter, in this chapter, South Carolina), p. 8.

³⁷ Cf. Mss. minutes, Presbytery of New Brunswick, Vol. II (hereafter, in this chapter, New Brunswick), pp. 221-222; Mss. minutes, Presbytery of Donegal, Vol. II (hereafter, in this chapter, Donegal), p. 17; Mss. minutes, Presbytery of New Castle (hereafter, in this chapter, New Castle), III, pp. 10, 347; Minutes of the Presbytery of Redstone (hereafter, in this chapter, Redstone), p. 338 (pagination follows Smith).

Order[ed], that the Clerk send a Copy of the foregoing Minute to the several vacancies under our Care. ³⁸

At its first session, in April of 1785, the Presbytery of South Carolina ordered that none of its congregations was to invite any man to preach, even once, without obtaining permission from a member of the presbytery, or at least receiving credentials proving that he was a member of the Synod. ³⁹

It was an increasing practice for presbyteries to appoint a committee to examine candidates in various parts of their trials for licensure and ordination. Such committees were assigned to meet during the session of the presbytery's meeting ⁴⁰ or at a time preceding the next stated meeting. ⁴¹ Occasionally, they were given the authority to license a successful candidate. ⁴²

Donegal, probably the most efficiently organized of all the presbyteries, employed the use of a "Committee for Congregational Affairs" during its meetings. These men were to enquire into the state of affairs in the various churches represented, both as to the ministers' faithfulness and the congregations' support of their ministers; the committee then was to report to the full meeting. ⁴³ A similar committee was used by the Presbytery of Hanover, ⁴⁴ and the full presbytery was freed for other business. Donegal also assigned to a committee the time-consuming

³⁸ New Brunswick, pp. 221-222.

³⁹ South Carolina, p. 2.

⁴⁰ Cf. Hanover, II, pp. 98, 157, 163, 168, 186.

⁴¹ Cf. Suffolk, p. 66; Mss. minutes, Presbytery of Philadelphia, [Vol. II] (hereafter, in this chapter, Philadelphia), p. 175; Mss. minutes, Second Presbytery of Philadelphia (hereafter, in this chapter, Second Philadelphia), p. 80.

⁴² Cf. Suffolk, p. 66; Philadelphia, p. 175; Second Philadelphia, p. 88.

⁴³ Cf. Donegal, p. 425.

⁴⁴ Cf. Hanover, II, p. 122.

and complicated task of determining supply appointments at each stated meeting; the committee was directed to prepare a "draught of supplies".⁴⁵ The Presbyteries of New Castle and South Carolina also employed the use of such a committee.⁴⁶

The practice of the presbyteries' rotating their meetings in order to keep in close touch with the life of their congregations was adapted in an interesting way by the Presbytery of Lexington. During its first year of existence, 1786, this presbytery ruled that several committees would be appointed annually, and each, composed of two ministers and two ruling elders, was to visit "the different Churches under our Care", giving at least twenty days' notice prior to the visitation. Worship was to be held at the opening of the visit, and following the Benediction the pastor of the church was to leave, and the committee was to question the congregation regarding his faithfulness. Those responsible for the congregation's finances were then to be questioned with regard to their faithfulness in providing the minister's salary. The committee was to take the names of all those delinquent in their subscriptions, along with the amount, and lay them before the following meeting of presbytery. Moreover, the committees were to have authority either to give advice or to make regulations with regard to the respective churches, and a report of the visitation was to be lodged with the presbytery. Lexington immediately proceeded to appoint nine committees to visit at least a dozen congregations.⁴⁷

The presbyteries continued and expanded the use of authoritative pro re nata committees, which had been a feature of the church's polity from the establishment of the original Presbytery. Yet now there seemed to be little hesitation in claiming for them full powers, although they, naturally, were answerable to their

⁴⁵ Cf. Donegal, p. 287.

⁴⁶ Cf. New Castle, III, p. 316; South Carolina, p. 4.

⁴⁷ Minutes, Presbytery of Lexington, Vol. I (hereafter, in this chapter, Lexington), pp. 4-7 (pagination follows Mss. records).

presbyteries. Differences between a minister and his people,⁴⁸ the dissolution of union between two churches,⁴⁹ and even the bringing of an Independent congregation into a presbytery,⁵⁰ were among the tasks fulfilled by the scores of committees appointed by the presbyteries during the latter years of Colonial America. Appointments were amazingly well-fulfilled,⁵¹ and the extensive use of committees with presbyterial power gave the system a flexibility that was vital to its existence.

b. Procedure

We have noted that the Synod, in drawing up its procedural rules in 1760, suggested their possible use by presbyteries. The Presbytery of Hanover in April of 1766 adopted them, with only slight changes in wording.⁵² When the Synod ruled in 1761 that presbyteries did not need to elect a new moderator at each meeting, it was stated that they could elect the same person "from time to time".⁵³ The Presbyteries of Donegal and New Castle perhaps stretched this ruling to an extent, in that they began electing both moderators and clerks on an annual basis, either at the spring⁵⁴ or autumn stated meetings.⁵⁵ In all presbyteries, the moderators had power to call meetings when the need arose.⁵⁶

⁴⁸ Hanover, I, pp. 46a-47a. This committee suspended the minister (pp. 51a-53a).

⁴⁹ Philadelphia, pp. 16-17.

⁵⁰ Suffolk, p. 98.

⁵¹ There were, of course, occasional failures in attendance. The Presbytery of New Castle was forbearing when a committee reported that it "met according to Appointment of Presby, save Mr Finley, who having lost his Horse, cou'd not attend". New Castle, III, p. 52.

⁵² Hanover, I, pp. 85a-87a.

⁵³ Records, p. 310.

⁵⁴ Cf. Donegal, pp. 283, 435; New Castle, IV, p. 157.

⁵⁵ New Castle, IV, pp. 224, 249.

⁵⁶ Cf. Philadelphia, p. 222.

All presbyteries followed the general pattern of holding two stated meetings a year, usually in April and October. The increased use of committees, especially to handle newly-arrived ministers and candidates, greatly reduced the number of pro re nata meetings held during this period.⁵⁷ Over a span of twenty-nine years, the Presbytery of New Castle needed to call only three meetings in addition to those to which it stood adjourned.

The reading of the minutes of the previous meeting formed the background for business; but occasionally these records would be missing. Sometimes this would cause the entire suspension of the meeting,⁵⁸ but it usually meant that a presbytery was "oblig'd to proceed upon their Memories".⁵⁹

The presbyteries usually convened on a Tuesday or Wednesday and attempted to complete the business at hand in time for the ministers to be in their pulpits on Sunday; but the Presbytery of Hanover broke with this tradition, in what is probably the only reference during the colonial period to the Sacraments being observed in church judicatories. At its September, 1786 meeting, Hanover agreed that at subsequent sessions the presbytery would be together on the Lord's Day, when the court would celebrate "the Lord's Supper". It was further ordered that at the opening of each meeting one member would preach upon a subject which had been assigned him at the previous presbytery.⁶⁰

C. Formation and reception of presbyteries

The Synod continued its sole control over the creation of new presbyteries, as

⁵⁷ In one of the few extra meetings called by the Presbytery of Philadelphia, the reason is that there is a large amount of business looming ahead for the adjourned meeting, during the intervals of the Synod; besides, "after the Synod Members were tired & impatient to be gone". Philadelphia, p. 22.

⁵⁸ Mss. minutes, Presbytery of Lewes (hereafter, in this chapter, Lewes), p. 121.

⁵⁹ New Castle, III, p. 15.

⁶⁰ Hanover, III, p. 3.

well as setting the requirements for previously-formed judicatories that desired to join the main body of American Presbyterianism. The rapidly growing church caused the Synod to create the Presbyteries of Orange in 1770,⁶¹ Redstone in 1781,⁶² South Carolina in 1784,⁶³ and Abingdon in 1785.⁶⁴ Further, as a prelude to the formation of the General Assembly, the 1786 Synod divided Abingdon into the Presbyteries of Abingdon and Transylvania, Hanover into the Presbyteries of Hanover and Lexington, and Donegal into the Presbyteries of Baltimore and Carlisle.⁶⁵

The normal procedure in such cases was for several members of an existing presbytery to ask that body to petition Synod for the creation of a new judicature. At a meeting of the Presbytery of Hanover in March of 1770 such a request was made by six of its members; the presbytery approved the plan and relayed the petition to the Synod, which sat in two months. The request was as follows:

Revd. Fathers and Brethren, the Distance we live from the usual Session of the Pby of Hanover, and the impossibility thence arising of our regular Attendance on it; our living in the Provance of N. Carolina where the affairs of Church and State requ[i]re our acting with that Vigour, Unanimity and Authority which is impossible for us to do in our present single and detached Situation, renders it indispensibly necessary for us to apply ourselves to the Revd. Synod, requesting that we may be erected into a Presbytery by the Name of ye Presbytery of Orange.....⁶⁶

The Synod constituted the new presbytery at its meeting in May.⁶⁷

Unresolved resentments which had been carried over by some from pre-union days

⁶¹ Records, p. 409.

⁶² Ibid., p. 491.

⁶³ Ibid., p. 504.

⁶⁴ Ibid., pp. 510-511.

⁶⁵ Ibid., pp. 522-523.

⁶⁶ Hanover, II, p. 10.

⁶⁷ Records, p. 409.

caused the Synod to create other new presbyteries during the first decade of its reunited state. The Second Presbytery of Philadelphia was erected in 1762 to accommodate five Old Side men who could not become reconciled to the practice of examining candidates in "experimental religion" (Cf. Infra, pp. 295-296). It had the same bounds as the (First) Presbytery of Philadelphia, and therefore was what has been termed an "elective affinity" presbytery.⁶⁸ Since it perpetuated division in the church, the Synod wisely reunited it with the (First) Presbytery of Philadelphia in 1786, on the eve of the formation of the general Assembly.⁶⁹

The same underlying difficulty caused several former Old Side men to petition the 1765 Synod either that the Presbytery of Donegal be divided into two presbyteries or that "the members [New Side] added to the Donegall Presbytery, when the Presbyteries were new[ly] modelled [at the reunion], be ordered to return to their former judicatories".⁷⁰ The Synod refused and instead, in an attempt to remove the friction in Donegal, dissolved the presbytery, along with the Presbytery of New Castle, and formed two new judicatories: Lancaster and Carlisle.⁷¹ Donegal had been predominantly 'Old Side' and none of its members was allowed to vote in this synodical decision, which gave them a certain ground for complaint. It was objected, therefore, that the action was a wrong committed against Donegal, "that has been long a respectable body",⁷² but the Synod's decision stood for the time being. Bringing the Donegal minute-book to a close, the clerk made this entry: "Here endeth the book of the Records of the Donegal Presbytery; the venerable aged matron having

⁶⁸ White, William P., "Presbyteries Organized in Philadelphia," JPH, VIII, p. 91.

⁶⁹ Records, p. 523.

⁷⁰ Ibid., pp. 347-348.

⁷¹ Ibid., pp. 349-350.

⁷² Ibid., p. 350.

expired in an apoplectic fit, before the next appointed time of the meeting of her sons". ⁷³

But the following year it was clear that the rearrangement had failed, and so the Synod restored both Donegal and New Castle, dissolving Lancaster and Carlisle. ⁷⁴
The clerk of Carlisle made his final contribution:

Here endeth the Book of records of Carlisle Presbytery which was born the 22nd. of May 1765 arrived to vigor and exercise of rational powers the day following, continued in perfect health, leading a quiet, peaceable, inoffensive and yet active life, until May 28th..1766, at which time a design was formed against her, and the next day put in execution, when she peaceably expired without complaint or groan. Of her may be said, she was born without Original sin, lived without allowed actual transgression, and died without presbyterial guilt. ⁷⁵

During this period the Synod received requests from two presbyteries to be received into membership. The first was in 1763, from "a Presbytery in New York government". ⁷⁶ The year before, three ministers had gathered, believing that it was "for the Interest of Religion to be regularly constituted a Presbytery" and then asked the Synod to receive them as a judicatory. ⁷⁷ The Synod stipulated that the ministers must adopt the Westminster Symbols and "engage to observe the Directory as a plan of worship, discipline, and government". The Synod, itself, christened the new presbytery "Dutchess (County)" and joined to it two members of the Presbytery of New York and two of the Presbytery of Suffolk. ⁷⁸ It was 1766 before the presbytery indicated that it had fulfilled all the requirements, and then became

⁷³ Donegal, p. 153.

⁷⁴ Records, pp. 357-360.

⁷⁵ Minutes, Presbytery of Carlisle (hereafter, in this chapter, Carlisle), p. 180 (the pagination follows the Mss. records and is a continuation of the record-book of Donegal, II).

⁷⁶ Records, p. 330.

⁷⁷ Nichols, Robert H., Presbyterianism In New York State, Philadelphia, 1963, p. 50.

⁷⁸ Records, p. 331.

an official part of the Synod.⁷⁹

The second request came in 1770 from the Presbytery of South Carolina, made up of congregations in the Charlestown area. It had been organized during the 1720's under the leadership of a Scot, Archibald Stobo,⁸⁰ and had continued in a fluctuating manner since that time. The Synod had had a certain amount of association with the presbytery: three members of the Presbyteries of New York and Philadelphia had been dismissed to join it,⁸¹ this coming about, partially, through the efforts of the Presbytery of Philadelphia to locate ministers and candidates who might be interested in accepting calls within its bounds;⁸² also, it had been one of the groups with which the Synod had begun to correspond. In its application, the presbytery indicated that it desired to join with the Synod and wanted "to be informed of the terms on which such union may be obtained....".⁸³ Adoption of the Westminster Symbols was indicated as the requirement, which is "only what we suppose you are already agreed in".⁸⁴ An answer was never received, and the presbytery passed out of existence during the War of Independence.⁸⁵

⁷⁹ It is strange that Nichols, op. cit., says that the new presbytery fulfilled the Synod's requirements "immediately".

⁸⁰ Cf. Ramsay, Jack, "Archibald Stobo, Presbyterian Pioneer," JPH, XXXVII, pp. 129-142. Stobo had been shipwrecked years before off the coast of South Carolina when attempting to return to Scotland after the ill-fated Darien expedition to Central America.

⁸¹ Gillett, E.H., History of the Presbyterian Church, etc., Vol. I, Philadelphia, 1873, p. 249n.

⁸² Philadelphia, p. 29[a].

⁸³ Records, pp. 408-409.

⁸⁴ Ibid., p. 409.

⁸⁵ Thompson, Ernest T., Presbyterians in the South, Vol. I: 1607-1861, Richmond, 1963, p. 40. Cf. Baird, Samuel J., (ed.), A Collection of the Acts, etc., Philadelphia, 1858, p. 563.

If it can be accepted that what was to become the Presbytery of Dutchess was already a presbytery before it was received into the Synod, it and the Presbytery of Suffolk were the only judicatories received into the mainstream of American Presbyterianism during the colonial period. Both in receiving such a presbytery and in forming new ones from within its own body, the Synod had complete control of the structure of its 'inferior' courts, even to the transferring of ministers from one presbytery to another for the sake of better order.⁸⁶

The Synod made systematic review both of the presbyteries' minutes and of its own. The presbytery books include periodic statements showing that they have been reviewed and corrected, the statements always being signed by the moderator of the Synod. The 1769 Synod approved the New Brunswick book, "except the recording [of] some letters wrote to a distant member".⁸⁷ More serious problems had been noted in the 1764 review of the Suffolk book,⁸⁸ which we shall consider presently.

Beginning in 1760, the Synod adopted the practice of the former Synod of Philadelphia (Cf. Supra, pp. 226-7) of requiring reports to be presented by the presbyteries at its annual meeting. These reports included ministers received, installed, or dismissed; candidates received, licensed, ordained, or dismissed; ministers or candidates suspended or deposed; and ministerial necrology.

D. Control of ministers and candidates

These years saw a number of significant developments in the efficiency of synodical and presbyterial supervision of ministers and candidates for the ministry. Both by decree and necessity the presbytery emerged from the period as the radical judicatory in American Presbyterianism for ministerial direction.

⁸⁶ Cf. Records, pp. 405, 470.

⁸⁷ Records, p. 398. Cf. New Brunswick, pp. 278-289.

⁸⁸ Records, p. 339.

1. Reception

The process of a Presbyterian minister or probationer removing from one presbytery to be received into another had become well organized by the latter part of this period. Credentials were given him by his old presbytery, signifying his good standing and that he had been released in an orderly fashion; without such evidence, a presbytery would not receive a man to labor in its bounds. Even visiting ministers were required to produce their certificates before being invited to sit as 'correspondents' at a meeting of presbytery.⁸⁹

Such orderly procedures were quite beneficial to candidates moving from one presbytery to another. When Joseph Treat was received in November, 1759 by the Presbytery of New Brunswick, he was admitted on "the same Footing on which he Stood in the Presbytery of Philadelphia".⁹⁰ In other words, his certificate of dismissal from Philadelphia listed the trials that he already had completed before that presbytery; therefore, New Brunswick would not need to re-examine him on those parts.

This inter-presbyterial movement was controlled completely by the presbyteries, and only in the rare case of an appeal did the Synod become involved. Occasionally, certificates and testimonials were supplemented by inter-presbytery correspondence. In 1773 the 'frontier' Presbyteries of Hanover and Orange requested all the presbyteries "to the eastward" to send them, "with all convenient speed, the suspension or deposition of any member or candidate from their bodies, to prevent the Presbyteries aforesaid being imposed upon" by unqualified men.⁹¹ Seven years later, Orange corresponded with the Presbytery of Donegal regarding a certain candidate, Samuel

⁸⁹ Donegal, p. 412.

⁹⁰ New Brunswick, p. 47.

⁹¹ Records, p. 449.

Kennedy,⁹² whom Donegal formerly had ordered to cease preaching.⁹³ Before moving to North Carolina, into the bounds of Orange, Kennedy had received some written recommendations from Donegal, and now he was asking Orange to take him as a candidate, claiming that he had such authority from Donegal. Donegal wrote to Orange that the papers it had given Kennedy before his departure were strictly for his recommendation "in the Character of a private Man.....In a Word we neither did, nor designed to recommend him as a Preacher".⁹⁴ Kennedy was never licensed.

As to the reception of ministers from other colonial denominations, either the Synod or a presbytery could and did receive. But in the few cases where the Synod, itself, accepted a minister,⁹⁵ he was ordered to immediate membership in a presbytery; when the presbyteries initiated the reception of such a minister he became, ipso facto, a member of the Synod.⁹⁶ It no longer was possible for a minister to be a member of the Synod without being a member of one of the presbyteries. This is illustrated by the fact that in the Synod's minutes attendance and absence of ministers are listed by presbyteries.⁹⁷

But the reception of ministers and candidates from overseas caused one of the most severe struggles of this period. The Kennedy affair probably triggered the

⁹² He is not to be confused with the Reverend Samuel Kennedy, a member of the Presbytery of New Brunswick during this period. The candidate had been licensed by the Presbytery of Dromore in Ulster, in 1767. Records of the General Synod of Ulster, 1691-1820, Vol. II, Belfast, 1897, p. 499.

⁹³ Records, p. 452. This was in 1773, and the same year the Synod rebuked Kennedy. Ibid., pp. 441-442.

⁹⁴ Donegal, p. 350.

⁹⁵ Cf. Records, pp. 350, 460, 478.

⁹⁶ Cf. Hanover, III, p. 16; Suffolk, p. 96 and Records, p. 334.

⁹⁷ With the exceptions of 1758, 1759, 1760, 1766, and 1767.

uneasiness of many of the members of the Synod with regard to what they considered the unsoundness of many British ministers, especially those from Ireland. Kennedy had been silenced because he preached unsound doctrine, according to the Presbytery of Donegal, his 'heresies' undoubtedly having to do with the Arianism and New Light theology that had been interwoven into the British subscription controversy. Therefore, the very afternoon following the morning session of the 1773 Synod, at which Kennedy had been rebuked, an overture was presented. Its author was John Roan, member of the Presbytery of Donegal, the court which had had so much trouble with Kennedy. The overture says that there is a great threat that the church may be invaded by unsound British ministers, so before any "strangers" are admitted into the American church there must be ample time to examine "their principles and character". Therefore,

It is overtured, that no Presbytery be permitted to receive any stranger under the character of minister or candidate, or to give him appointments in the congregations under our care, until the Synod that shall meet next after their arrival, that the whole testimonials and credentials offered by such persons be laid before the Synod, to be by them considered and judged of, in order to their admission or rejection. ⁹⁸

This overture was passed by "a small majority".

A chorus of protest arose. It was argued that the act "takes away from the Presbyteries some of their essential right, restraining them from performing the duties of ordaining and admitting ministers agreeably to the Scriptures and the constitution and practice of the Presbyterian churches". Since Christ has given these responsibilities to regularly gathered presbyteries, they cannot be

⁹⁸ Records, pp. 442-443. The fourth "query" had dealt with the possible reception of heretical "foreign" ministers. The Synods of 1764 and 1765 had urged the presbyteries to take extreme care in receiving new men from outside the bounds of the Synod. This was directed against the New Light heresy in Great Britain, but also toward "particular judicatories and individual ministers who may, and in some places on this continent, do convene together as a temporary judicature for the single purpose of licensing, or ordaining a candidate". Ibid., p. 338, Cf. p. 344. This statement was aimed squarely at New England Congregationalism and reveals, by implication, the Synod's own understanding of the wide scope of activity to be entered into by the church's judicatories.

surrendered. If presbyteries err in administering these powers "they are accountable to the higher judicatures of the church, but they are not to be deprived of them merely because they may err in the exercise of them".⁹⁹

A second group also argued against the act, stating that it "tends to overthrow the essential rights of a presbytery, the radical judicature of our church....and from which we derive our name, Presbyterians".¹⁰⁰ Of the ten ministers who signed formal written protests, only four had been ministers in the church prior to the union, and while there is no consistent line of continuing Old Side-New Side hostilities it is interesting to note that these four had all been on the Old Side during the division. In a sense, the situation had been reversed completely in that it had been the Old Side which had accepted the use of synodical power over presbyteries in the matter of the examination of candidates (Cf. Supra, pp.175-180). Now several of the former Old Side ministers were arguing against the authority of the Synod in relation to the rights of presbyteries. In response to the protests the Synod said that it would be difficult to prove "that the right of admitting persons already licensed or ordained belongs to Presbyteries exclusively".¹⁰¹

In any case, three days later a very wise compromise was struck; one that the entire Synod could accept. An unknown member moved:

Whereas many brethren are dissatisfied with the act of Synod respecting the non-admission of ministers and candidates into our Presbyteries from foreign parts, it is proposed that the Presbytery to which any such gentlemen may offer themselves, may be allowed, if they see their way clear, to employ them in their vacancies, but that they be not admitted to full membership until the next Synod, when their testimonials and recommendations shall be laid before the Synod.¹⁰²

⁹⁹ Ibid., p. 443.

¹⁰⁰ Ibid., p. 444.

¹⁰¹ Ibid., p. 445.

¹⁰² Ibid., p. 448.

The following year, 1774, the offensive act is reversed "by a considerable majority" and another, embodying the compromise motion, is adopted. If the Synod finds, when reviewing the credentials of any minister or candidate who has been received from overseas during the year, that "the said testimonials [are] false or insufficient", then the whole of the receiving presbytery's action will be negated, and "the admission shall be held to be void". ¹⁰³

The minutes both of the presbyteries and of the Synod show a careful compliance with the act. When, in 1785, the Presbytery of Redstone received Alexander Addison, a probationer from Scotland, it received also a request from a congregation to appoint Addison as a supply; in addition, the church asked that a member of the presbytery might be sent to moderate in the forming of a call to the candidate. While allowing him to supply the congregation, the presbytery ruled that "as the moderating, in drawing up a call....[would] not consist with a minute of Synod on this subject, we cannot at present make the appointment". ¹⁰⁴

The War took away the immediacy of the act, and for its duration only one minister, a Scot, applied, having his credentials placed before the Synod. ¹⁰⁵ But from 1785 to 1788 the presbyteries presented the Synod with seven ministers and five probationers from overseas; the credentials of all these men were approved. In addition, there were few occasions when a minister or candidate from overseas applied directly to the Synod for admission; but in each case the man's credentials were examined, and, if approved, he was assigned to membership in a presbytery. When the Reverend James Thompson from the Presbytery of Dundee presented himself, his papers were examined, and he was ordered to join a presbytery, and until that time

¹⁰³ Ibid., pp. 455-456.

¹⁰⁴ Redstone, p. 339.

¹⁰⁵ Records, p. 472.

he was invited to sit with the Synod only in the capacity of a correspondent.¹⁰⁶
 The Presbytery of New Castle recorded in 1786 that Thompson's "Credentials were laid before Synod and approved", and he was accepted as a member of the presbytery.¹⁰⁷
 But when the Reverend John Middleson, from the Presbytery of Belfast, asked the Synod to receive him and assign him to the Presbytery of New Castle, it was judged, upon examination of his credentials, that he "ought not, at present, to be annexed, as a member.....".¹⁰⁸

2. Examination of candidates

a. Trials

Examinations for candidates looking forward to licensure and ordination continued to rest solely in the hands of the presbyteries. These trials were just as extensive as before, although there was an occasional assignment of a thesis in English rather than Latin.¹⁰⁹ On one occasion the Presbytery of New Brunswick waved altogether the requirement for the presentation of a thesis. Three candidates who had gone through the normal trials and who also had been sent on extensive preaching assignments "represented to the Presby. Their great Fatigue, and continued Hurry, in riding from Place to Place, and begged to be excused from making Exegeses as usual, before ordination: and these their Requests were granted".¹¹⁰ The Synod made no comment when it reviewed the minutes. Also, apparently the examination in Hebrew generally had fallen into disuse; there are constant references to candidates being examined in Greek and Latin, but seemingly only one in Hebrew.¹¹¹

¹⁰⁶ Ibid., p. 517.

¹⁰⁷ New Castle, IV, pp. 262-263.

¹⁰⁸ Records, pp. 511-512.

¹⁰⁹ Cf. Suffolk, pp. 187, 189; Redstone, p. 350.

¹¹⁰ New Brunswick, pp. 93-94.

¹¹¹ Mss. minutes, Presbytery of Lancaster (hereafter, in this chapter, Lancaster), p. 31.

The presbyteries showed a certain amount of latitude in the assignments made. South Carolina examined one candidate "on Virgil, Horace, and the Greek Testament",¹¹² and New Castle another in mathematics.¹¹³ This presbytery asked three candidates to indicate what books they had read in history and divinity,¹¹⁴ which was one of the more creative additions to the examinations. New Castle also made a practice of examining candidates on church government. In May, 1769 John McCreary was "examined particularly...respecting the Nature of a Gospel Church, and its Government under Jesus Christ its head by Pby:". ¹¹⁵ Most certainly, it was this practice which prompted the Synod in 1785 to rule that all the presbyteries must "subject every candidate on trials for the ministry, to an accurate examination on the discipline of the Presbyterian Church". ¹¹⁶

The assignments given to Thomas Smith by the Presbytery of New Castle serve as a good illustration of the trials faced by candidates during the period. He presented himself, along with his diploma from the College of New Jersey, to the presbytery in January of 1770. At that meeting, and three subsequent ones later the same year, his examinations took this order: Questioned on reasons for seeking the ministry; questioned in 'experimental religion'; questioned by members on "cases of conscience" (whatever personal questions members had to ask); examined in Latin, Greek, and Logic; presented a Latin exegesis; examined in metaphysics and moral philosophy; delivered an assigned sermon on Romans 5:25; examined "at length" in Divinity;

¹¹² South Carolina, p. 6.

¹¹³ New Castle, III, p. 308.

¹¹⁴ Ibid., p. 318. This had been stipulated by Westminster. Cf. The Form of Presbyterial Church-Government, etc., in The Confession of Faith, etc., Edinburgh, 1831, p. 588.

¹¹⁵ Ibid., p. 215. Cf. pp. 277-278.

¹¹⁶ Records, p. 512.

delivered assigned lectures on Philippians 3:1-10 and Acts 3:31; delivered an assigned sermon on Hebrews 12:14; subscribed the Westminster Symbols and promised "subjection to this Phy in the Lord"; was licensed in October.

For six months Smith preached in the presbytery's vacancies, and in April, 1771 four calls were presented for his settlement as pastor. Not accepting any of these, he preached in the bounds of the presbytery for twenty months more, accepting at the December, 1772 meeting a call presented from two united congregations. He then was assigned his "pieces of tryal for Ordination", which consisted of a sermon on Matthew 11:29 and a lecture on "Is Presbyterian Ordination Valid?" ¹¹⁷ In June of 1763, at a meeting of the presbytery in his prospective charge, he delivered the sermon and lecture and was examined on the nature and constitution of the Church, of church government and discipline, "and the proper subjects of bapt: & the L.'ds supper", whereupon he was ordained and installed.

Subscription was practiced faithfully by all the presbyteries, and there is no indication that it ever was omitted. ¹¹⁸ The presbyteries remained true to the sense of subscribing approved in the plan of union of 1758, and there appears to have been no further conflict over the matter. The Westminster Directory for Worship and Discipline was always included in the subscription. In a letter of 1768 to a minister in Nova Scotia, the Presbytery of New Brunswick said: "We receive the Westminster Confession of Faith in the true grammatical Sense of the Words, & are strictly Calvinistic. And the Westminster Directory is the Model of our Worship and Government." ¹¹⁹

¹¹⁷ Cf. Philadelphia, p. 218, where a candidate is assigned this topic for a thesis.

¹¹⁸ The Synod, reviewing the Suffolk record-book in 1764, objected that there was no mention of candidates "adopting our public standards". But that presbytery assured the Synod that it was their "constant practice" to do so. Records, p. 339. Cf. Suffolk, p. 102. The following month, June, the presbytery ordained Benjamin Goldsmith and recorded that he adopted "our publick Standards". P. 104. Suffolk continued the recording of subscription from this time forward.

¹¹⁹ New Brunswick, p. 288.

A serious problem developed in the church over the examination in 'experimental religion'. While it had arisen during the schism (Cf. Supra, p. 170) it had not fully come into the open. However, the experience of 'revival religion' made the New Side men anxious to make certain that only 'spiritually qualified' men were set apart to the work of the ministry. They believed that questions asked by a presbytery could determine the spiritual status of a candidate and that such an examination was a valid basis for his acceptance or rejection. The plan of union stated that a candidate must give a presbytery "competent satisfaction as to his learning, and experimental acquaintance with religion".¹²⁰ The point turned on whether this meant that a candidate should be required to describe in minute detail how the grace of God had touched his own life from time to time, or whether he should relate in general his understanding of the workings of that grace.

The matter, which had caused some difficulties in the presbyteries, especially Philadelphia,¹²¹ came to light in the Synod of 1761, consumed much of the Synod's time, and marred its good relations.¹²² The final act, adopted in 1762, said:

The Synod earnestly desiring that all due liberty of conscience be preserved inviolate, and that peace and harmony be maintained and promoted, do agree that, when any person shall offer himself as a candidate for the ministry to any of our Presbyteries, every member of the Presbytery may use that way which he in conscience looks upon proper, to obtain a competent satisfaction of the person's experimental acquaintance with religion, and that then the Presbytery, as a Presbytery, shall determine whether they will take him on further trials.¹²³

But the agreement "did not satisfy a number of the Synod".¹²⁴ Indeed, it was the

¹²⁰ Records, p. 287.

¹²¹ Philadelphia, pp. 15, 28-29.

¹²² Cf. Records, pp. 310, 317-321, 357.

¹²³ Ibid., p. 321.

¹²⁴ Ibid.

immediate cause of the erection of the Second Presbytery of Philadelphia and the divisions and reunions centered around the Presbytery of Donegal. All the presbyteries, except the Second Presbytery of Philadelphia, carried-out some type of examination regarding their candidates' 'experimental acquaintance with religion', but in many cases it is obvious that this was perfunctory.

The non-revivalistic attitude was argued ably, in 1766, by Patrick Alison. Orderly ordination by a regularly-formed court of the Church must be the real basis for making a true minister of Jesus Christ. "Secret spiritual states" always can be fabricated in an examination. If they are the real criteria then the validity of baptism and the Lord's Supper becomes suspect. Examination must be made of a candidate's outward behavior, but this is not the essential. Correct order is the only ultimate guarantee of a faithful Church and ministry.¹²⁵ Alison here shows that the basic conflict between the two positions was due to disagreement about the primary nature of the Church; he is arguing for an objective as against a subjective view. An examination of the minutes of the judicatories of this period shows that the practice of or omission of a probing examination into the personal 'spiritual life' of ministerial candidates, along with a prolonged reading of their moral temperature, was no guarantee of their conduct, once ordained.

b. Educational requirements

The Synod felt the need to make formal stipulation of the academic standards necessary for a man to attain before a presbytery could receive him as a candidate for licensure and ordination. Educational standards for Presbyterian ministers had been very high throughout the colonial period. At the reunion in 1758 sixty-eight of the ninety-six members of Synod were graduates of an American or British university, twenty-four had been educated at private American academies, and the

¹²⁵ Cf. Trinterud, Leonard J., The Forming of An American Tradition, etc., Philadelphia, 1949, pp. 162-163 for the summary of Alison's argument.

education of four is unknown.¹²⁶ The church had every intention of maintaining a standard of academic excellence.

In 1761 the Synod ruled that every man who planned to become a candidate for the ministry must, on the completion of his college-level work, spend one year studying "divinity" under the supervision "of some minister of an approved character for his skill in theology; and under his direction...discuss difficult points in divinity, study the sacred Scriptures, form sermons, lectures, and such other useful exercises as he may be directed to in the course of his studies". Further, it was ordered that every man, for one year after he had been licensed to preach, must show all his sermons, in written form, to some minister "on whose friendship and candour he depends".¹²⁷

By 1775 the Presbytery of New Castle was not certain whether or not a course of education at an academy qualified a man to become a candidate, the point being raised by the application of a young man who had been educated at Newark Academy. The presbytery was divided in its opinion and decided not to receive him until the Synod had answered the question: "May Presbyteries license Persons to preach ye Gospel, who have not obtained a Degree from some College?"¹²⁸ The Synod answered at its next meeting, saying that it was "highly expedient" for men looking forward to the ministry to attend "public seminaries" (i.e. colleges or universities); the presbyteries should be engaged in "warmly recommending" the "superior advantages" to those planning for the ministry. "Yet as Presbyteries are the proper judges to determine concerning the literary and other requisite qualifications for the ministerial office, it is not intended to preclude from admission to trial, those who have not had the opportunity of obtaining public testimonials or degrees from public seminaries".¹²⁹

¹²⁶ Cf. Ibid., p. 152.

¹²⁷ Records, p. 309.

¹²⁸ New Castle, IV, p. 107.

¹²⁹ Records, p. 475.

The Synod was asked in 1783 whether a man who had had no liberal education might be taken on trials by a presbytery. The answer was in the negative.¹³⁰ And two years later an overture was presented to the Synod, noting the pressing need for ministers and asking if, under the circumstances, the church might "relax, in any degree...the literary qualifications required of intrants into the ministry?" Again, the answer was a strong negative;¹³¹ but the Synod did not think it wise at the time to increase the requirements. When at this same meeting it was moved that candidates be required to study divinity for at least two years following the completion of their liberal education, the Synod hesitated.¹³² The following year the motion was voted upon and rejected, "considering the present circumstances of our churches".¹³³

c. Orderly care

The maturation of presbyterial procedures is nowhere better indicated than in the plans proposed for the orderly reception and care of candidates. The third "query" (Cf. Supra, p. 274) was answered by the Synod in 1764. A candidate desiring to enter upon trials for the ministry was to come under the care of the "presbytery to which he most naturally belongs"; it would be possible for him to transfer his candidacy to another presbytery, but only on recommendation from his 'home' presbytery.¹³⁴

¹³⁰ Ibid., p. 499.

¹³¹ Ibid., p. 511.

¹³² Ibid., p. 512.

¹³³ Ibid., p. 521. At least one candidate, Thomas Stewart, had studied divinity for two years following his graduation from a college. He was received on trials by the Presbytery of New Castle in 1787. New Castle, IV, p. 274. On the subject of education for the ministry Cf. Shewmaker, W.O., "The Training of the Protestant Ministry in the United States of America, Before the Establishment of Theological Seminaries," Papers of the American Society of Church History (Second Series), Vol. VI, pp. 71-202.

¹³⁴ Records, pp. 337-338. The fifth "query" had dealt with the question of a candidate's going to New England to be licensed and then returning to the Synod for ordination. In answering, the Synod said that while it had a high opinion of the churches in New England, it judged "that students who go to them, or to any other than our own Presbyteries to obtain license, in order to return and officiate among us, act very irregularly". Such licentiates are not to be employed by the presbyteries, since "we are deprived of the right of trying and approving the qualifications of our own candidates". Ibid., p. 338.

The Presbytery of Philadelphia in 1760 felt that it did not know its candidates well enough. It therefore ordered that all future candidates under its care must, prior to being assigned parts of trial, visit as many of the presbytery's members as was possible, "that they may converse with him at their own Houses". Those whom he could not visit he should approach during the time of a presbytery meeting, "or on some other suitable Occasion". And before any candidate offered himself to the presbytery for trials he must discuss the matter with one of its ministers. The minister then would present the matter to the court, and it would be decided if the man should begin his trials at once, or if it would be necessary for him to continue his studies in divinity. ¹³⁵

One of the most important developments was the realization on the part of the judicatories of their responsibility for the material support of their potential ministers. In June of 1769 a motion was made in the Presbytery of New Brunswick that a plan be drawn up for the presbytery's "supporting poor pious youth, while prosecuting their studies with a View to the Gospel Ministry". ¹³⁶ In April, 1771 the presbytery decided that it could do nothing in the matter at that time. ¹³⁷

But over in the Presbytery of New Castle, more concrete efforts were being made. In 1770, recently-ordained Joseph Montgomery proposed a plan for the support of ministerial students and was directed, along with another minister, to perfect the scheme and lay it again before the presbytery. ¹³⁸ In April of the following year an excellent plan was presented to and approved by the court. It called for each vacancy which was supplied by the presbytery to pay into a presbyterial treasurer

¹³⁵ Philadelphia, p. 21.

¹³⁶ New Brunswick, p. 323.

¹³⁷ Ibid., pp. 351-352.

¹³⁸ New Castle, III, pp. 244, 247.

£2 a year, at the autumn stated meeting; at the same time, each minister of the presbytery was to pay in £1. The Treasurer was to pay out no money without a written order from the presbytery. A provision was to be made for individuals to make annual subscriptions to the fund.

Regarding recipients of the money, any member of the presbytery would be permitted to present young men for examination. Money was granted by a majority vote of the presbytery, and if a young man received a grant the presbytery automatically became "the guardians of his education, and as such shall give all orders relative thereto". Moreover, by accepting money from this fund such a young man was to be considered "as natively belonging to this presbytery"; after he had been licensed, he was obligated to supply its vacancies for at least one year. And if any man received aid from the presbytery, but later ceased "the work of the ministry in the pbn [i.e. Presbyterian] church" he was bound to repay all monies received, within five years. ¹³⁹

The next month, May of 1771, the presbytery shared its plan with the Synod, which praised it highly and recommended that all the presbyteries adopt it or some similar means of supporting students planning for the ministry. ¹⁴⁰ In 1773 it was reported by the Presbyteries of New York, Second Philadelphia, and New Brunswick that they had "complied fully". ¹⁴¹ New Brunswick had adopted the New Castle proposal "as its own", with minor changes. Explicit mention had not been made in the New Castle version ~~for~~ participation by congregations with settled pastors, but this was emphasized by New Brunswick. Moreover, it was made clear that if a man had to leave the ministry for no fault of his own he would not be obligated to repay the grant. Those who did cease the ministry and were liable to repay, would do so

¹³⁹ Ibid., pp. 268-269.

¹⁴⁰ Records, pp. 419-420.

¹⁴¹ Ibid., p. 438.

without paying interest and would have seven, rather than five years, to reimburse the fund; "which Sum, when obtained, shall be faithfully laid out for the Same Purpose".¹⁴²

d. Licensure, ordination, and installation

The practice of licensing candidates was part of American Presbyterianism from its inception (Cf. Supra, p. 69). Its use had been unquestioned, and the licensed candidate, while not being allowed to perform the Sacraments or officiate at weddings, had full authority to preach in any vacant congregation within his presbytery, that might invite him. In 1758 the whole system was called into question.

Ebenezer Prime, one of the founders of the Presbytery of Suffolk, revealed his dissatisfaction to that presbytery in June of 1758, arguing that the practice of licensing was unscriptural. It was his view that "solemn Ordination, by the laying on of the Hands of the Presbytery, is necessary in Order to the Preaching of the Gospel, according to divine Institution".¹⁴³ The implications are clear. If a man had to be ordained before he could begin any preaching, then, almost inevitably, he would have to be ordained sine titulo, a minister-at-large with no particular charge.

Immediately, two candidates appeared at this very meeting to say that they fully agreed with Prime and wanted the presbytery to ordain them, thus by-passing licensure. This was done, but the court was uneasy over the matter¹⁴⁴ and continued to license those candidates who did not object to the practice.¹⁴⁵ In the meantime, Prime, who was old and in poor health, became more obsessed with his opposition to licensure. He was incapable of actively fulfilling his ministry, and his church at Huntington, Long Island, was busy trying to find an assistant pastor. But they were limited.

¹⁴² New Brunswick, pp. 368-370.

¹⁴³ Suffolk, p. 63.

¹⁴⁴ Ibid., pp. 63, 64, 67, 77.

¹⁴⁵ Cf. Ibid., pp. 68, 91.

Any prospective candidate must be ordained, said Prime; no unordained man would preach in his pulpit. Year after year the congregation attempted to find an ordained assistant, but to no avail. 146

Finally, the people reached the end of their Christian endurance. In June of 1765 they asked the presbytery if they might call an unordained candidate, since they could not find an ordained man for the job. The permission was immediately granted (with a reminder that the congregation must be "under the Direction of ye Presbytery" in the matter). As all expected, Prime stated that if such a person were called, he desired the presbytery to dissolve his relation with his church. This was regretted, but the presbytery ruled that if an unordained candidate were asked to come to preach to the congregation, on trial, "then, & in such Case, the Pastoral relation of ye Revd. Mr. Prime to sd. Chh. & Congregation, shall, (upon the first Sermon preach'd in his Pulpit, by such an one) be Dis[s]olved, ipso facto". 147

In the meantime the Synod had been asked to rule on the propriety of ordaining men sine titulo. It was determined in 1764 that such ordination was, in ordinary situations, "highly inexpedient, and of dangerous consequences". There were some circumstances, for example missions to the Indians, where it might be accepted, but since "the honour and reputation of the Synod is much interested in the conduct of Presbyteries in such special cases" the presbyteries were required to receive permission from the Synod before ordaining a man who had no particular call. If the case were crucial the presbytery could proceed, but it was required to lay the full matter, with reasons for the action, before the following Synod. 148 The Synod also noted

146 In 1763 a call was handed to the Presbytery of New Brunswick for the Reverend William Kirkpatrick to settle at Huntington "as an Assistant, or Colleague with Mr. Prime, whose Age, and manifold Infirmities have disabled him at present for ministerial Labors". But the presbytery refused to present the call to Kirkpatrick. New Brunswick, pp. 133, 145.

147 Suffolk, pp. 111-113.

148 Records, p. 337. Reformed churches have always hesitated to ordain ministers sine titulo, Cf. Ainslie, James L., The Doctrines of Ministerial Order in the Reformed Churches of the 16th and 17th Centuries, Edinburgh, 1940, pp. 143-146.

in reviewing Suffolk's records the unique practice of licensing "for a certain time"; and the Synod highly disapproved.¹⁴⁹ The reasons for candidates having to apply to this presbytery for a 'renewal' of their licenses is not known.

Suffolk complied with the Synod's regulation regarding sine titulo ordination,¹⁵⁰ but Prime could not live with the situation. In 1771 he wrote directly to the Synod, complaining of the 1764 act and "requesting some relief in that matter".¹⁵¹ In answer, the Synod said that it was "firmly persuaded that our method of licensing them [i.e. candidates] to preach, by way of probation for the gospel ministry, before ordination, is grounded on general directions given by the apostle, that we should lay hands suddenly on no man, but should commit this to faithful men who are known to be able to teach others". The Synod was quite benevolent and, while not reversing its act, gave the Presbytery of Suffolk permission to ordain two candidates sine titulo, for whom Prime had made a special request in his letter.¹⁵² The presbyteries continued an active compliance with the regulation throughout the period.¹⁵³

On one occasion the Synod took extraordinary action in ordination. At the first meeting of the united Synod, application was made from a Welsh community for the ordination of John Griffith. Most of the people could not understand English, and Griffith spoke their language. Although he had not had a liberal education, the Synod found upon careful examination that he was well qualified; since the "circumstances of that people are singular, and no other way appears in which they can

¹⁴⁹ Records, p. 339.

¹⁵⁰ Ibid., p. 361.

¹⁵¹ Ibid., p. 414.

¹⁵² Ibid., p. 415. April, 1772 again found Prime in his presbytery, dissenting from the licensure of John Blydenborough. Suffolk, p. 153.

¹⁵³ Cf. Philadelphia, p. 219; New Castle, III, p. 278, IV, p. 116; Lexington, p. 14; Records, pp. 491, 494, 516, 540.

enjoy ordinances", the Synod agreed to his ordination, even though he did not have the educational background which was judged "to be ordinarily requisite". Strangely, the Synod did not appoint one of its presbyteries to ordain, yet did not perform the action as the Synod. Four members, three of the Presbytery of Philadelphia and one of the Presbytery of New York, were appointed "to be a Presbytery pro re nata, to ordain him tomorrow at 11 o'clock".¹⁵⁴ This was the sole instance in the entire colonial period of a Synod's appointing a "pro re nata" presbytery.

All other ordinations were performed by the individual presbyteries. With one exception, all the presbyteries ordained only at full meetings, usually convened at the ordinand's prospective charge.¹⁵⁵ Apparently, the only presbytery during this period to use a committee for ordination was Suffolk;¹⁵⁶ yet at other times it also ordained candidates at regular meetings. Such was the case when Thomas Smith and Moses Barrett were ordained sine titulo at a full meeting in May of 1760, and, since Suffolk was the only presbytery to record the full outline of their services of ordination, the setting apart of these two men gives a fine illustration of such an act. Leading in worship were James Browne, Ebenezer Prime, and Samson Occum, the converted Mohegan Indian turned minister. Following is the order of service, indicating the parts taken:¹⁵⁷

Prayer (Browne)

Sermon -- from Matthew 4:19 (Browne)

Questions to candidates

Ordination Prayer (Prime) during the Imposition of hands upon Barrett

Ordination Prayer (Browne) during the Imposition of hands upon Smith

Right Hand of Fellowship (Prime)

¹⁵⁴ Records, p. 289.

¹⁵⁵ Cf. New Brunswick, p. 73; Philadelphia, p. 22; South Carolina, p. 3; New Castle, IV, p. 232. The Presbytery of Donegal continued its practice of making "public notice" in the congregation prior to an ordination. Cf. Donegal, pp. 320-321.

¹⁵⁶ Suffolk, p. 67.

¹⁵⁷ Ibid., p. 79.

Charge to the new ministers (Prime)
 Prayer (Occum)
 Pointing out of the Psalm (Smith)
 Blessing (Barrett)

An interesting minute was recorded by Suffolk on December 22, 1785: "At 11 o' the Clock, a.m. The presbytery walked in Procession to Church for the Purpose of set[t]ing Mr. N. Woodhull apart to the Work of the evangelical Ministry." ¹⁵⁸

Installation of pastors appears never to have been omitted during these years. It always was carried out by order of a presbytery, whether performed by an individual minister of the presbytery, ¹⁵⁹ a committee of the presbytery, ¹⁶⁰ or the whole presbytery. ¹⁶¹ In this last category, again the Presbytery of Suffolk gives us our only view of the full service. On April 13, 1786 the presbytery met at Brookhaven, Long Island to install the Reverend Noah Wetmore. Participating in the service were Joshua Hart, the Reverend Mr Stores (who had been invited to sit with the presbytery for the occasion), Samuel Buell, and Benjamin Goldsmith: ¹⁶²

Prayer (Hart)
 Sermon --from II Corinthians 2:16 (Buell)
 Prayer (Stores)
 Mutual Engagements between minister and church (Buell)
 Short Charge to Minister (Buell)
 Short Charge to Congregation (Buell)
 Concluding Prayer (Goldsmith)
 Psalm (led by Wetmore)
 Blessing (Wetmore)

e. Discipline

In the matter of the disciplining of ministers and candidates the Synod never initiated action, during the period under consideration. There were instances when

¹⁵⁸ Ibid., p. [184].

¹⁵⁹ Cf. Hanover, I, p. 101a; Donegal, p. 326; Lewes, p. 127.

¹⁶⁰ Cf. Philadelphia, p. 28; New Castle, III, p. 41; Donegal, p. 344.

¹⁶¹ Cf. Hanover, II, 69; New Brunswick, p. 333; Philadelphia, p. 13.

¹⁶² Suffolk, p. [186].

the higher judicatory prohibited any of its presbyteries or congregations from employing deposed ministers, but the prohibitions and depositions came as the result of litigations that had begun in the lower courts. The cases would come before the Synod by appeal from the disciplined minister,¹⁶³ or by reference from the offended presbytery.¹⁶⁴ In the case of Samuel Eakin, the Synod in 1771 "do prohibit him, under pain of the highest censures of the church, from exercising the same [i.e. the ministry], or any part thereof, within the bounds of this Synod, or anywhere else, and discharge any inferior judicatory from taking off this suspension, and from receiving any application for that purpose". He also is excommunicated, but the Synod says that any presbytery in whose bounds he may reside, may "restore [him] to Christian communion, upon his application, when they shall see proper".¹⁶⁵ It is interesting that it is to be a presbytery rather than a local church session that is to have this authority.

Several very serious cases requiring ministerial discipline faced the presbyteries. The sexual exploits of Andrew Stirling held the attention of the Presbytery of New Castle for several meetings and filled a number of pages of testimony.¹⁶⁶ He was found guilty by the presbytery and defrocked, this fact being reported in 1765 to the Synod, which accepted the presbytery's determination without question.¹⁶⁷

Drunkenness was the most common offense. On a few occasions it recurred so often in a minister that he most certainly must have been an alcoholic;¹⁶⁸ but the

¹⁶³ Cf. Hanover, I, pp. 91a-92a and Records, pp. 394-396.

¹⁶⁴ Cf. Second Philadelphia, pp. 92-93 and Records, pp. 413-414, 418.

¹⁶⁵ Records, p. 418.

¹⁶⁶ New Castle, III, pp. 89-97.

¹⁶⁷ Records, p. 342.

¹⁶⁸ Cf. Suffolk, pp. 83-85, 92; New Castle, pp. 209, 213, 293-302.

distinction between illness and 'moral' difficulty could not be made at that time.

One minister, John Beard, was drunk when he preached in a vacancy. At his trial before the Presbytery of New Castle it was reported that Beard, who also had preached in the morning of the day in question, came into the church for the afternoon service, and

the clerk not being present he asked for him in an unusual lofty manner, and proceeded to sing the psalm himself, then prayed about 4 minutes, his prayer not being agreeable or connect....then gave out his text which was Mat. 26--10 [the woman's anointing of Jesus], laid out his diet; but did not proceed as proposed, but first fell into his forenoon's improvement [i.e. sermon], then into the 2d head of the forenoon's....then paused,--looking into his book, repeated 'well done good and faithful servants;' the foolish vergins thought to get oil of the wise; but did not--do you [observe?] me, gentlemen, it is by the mint of the gospel the wicked are to be saved. ¹⁶⁹

At this point the congregation walked out.

The Presbytery of New Castle faced not only the problem of ministerial consumption of liquor, but also of ministerial production of it. In June of 1763, the presbytery discovered that Andrew Bay had built a still in his manse and was distilling, bottling, and selling peach liquor. The presbytery was most concerned with Bay's marketing of his product and said that it would be "reputable for him to dispose of his still as soon as he can". ¹⁷⁰ Bay was accused of a number of other offenses, from stealing a horse ¹⁷¹ and a cow, ¹⁷² to shady business dealings. ¹⁷³ Bay's theology also was a

¹⁶⁹ New Castle, III, p. 295. Most of the congregation were quite upset with their elders for not protesting more strongly than they did against Beard's conduct. It was said that if the session "had been worth their ears, they would have pulled him out of the pulpit". P. 298. It appears that Beard also suffered from homosexuality. Cf. pp. 294, 296.

¹⁷⁰ Ibid., pp. 60, 69.

¹⁷¹ Ibid., p. 44.

¹⁷² Ibid., p. 57.

¹⁷³ Ibid., pp. 79-82. In the midst of these hearings it was reported that a rumor was abroad that Bay had been faithless to his wife. Upon investigation, the presbytery found the basis for the rumor in a 'joke' which had been spread by a Captain Hamilton. Hamilton had said that "he found Mr Bay in Bed with a Woman in York". When asked who, Hamilton then answered: "It was Mrs Bay". P. 82.

problem; in his preaching he said that to deny Predestination was worse than committing murder or adultery. ¹⁷⁴ The presbytery commended him for his zeal in doctrine, but suggested that perhaps more apt comparisons could be found. His hearings and trials probably consumed more space in the record-books than any other matter of ministerial discipline during the entire colonial period. ¹⁷⁵ He declined the authority of the Synod in 1776. ¹⁷⁶

In other cases, presbyteries strongly rebuked a minister for marrying a young couple without the consent of their parents, "who have a Right to dispose of them in Marriage", ¹⁷⁷ heard charges against a minister for using an unbecoming expression ("I swear that is good Punch") at a social gathering, ¹⁷⁸ and sat in judgement on the wife of a minister who accused her of unfaithfulness. In this last unhappy case the Presbytery of Philadelphia heard Nathaniel Irwin charge his wife with adultery with a local physician. She appeared before the presbytery and confessed her guilt, but accused Irwin of breaking her snuff-bottle and of having kicked her, pinched her, & pulled her out of Bed by the Hair of her Head, which last [charge], Mr Irwin denies". When the presbytery had heard "all they could obtain in this disagreeable Affair" it was ruled that because of Mrs Irwin's "heinous Transgression" Irwin had permission to divorce her. ¹⁷⁹

Candidates were subject to their presbytery not only for their studies and

¹⁷⁴ Ibid., p. 56.

¹⁷⁵ New Castle, III, pp. 44, 46-50, 56-73, 79-85, 155, 160; Lancaster, pp. 116, 130.

¹⁷⁶ Records, p. 475.

¹⁷⁷ New Castle, III, p. 9.

¹⁷⁸ Second Philadelphia, p. 28.

¹⁷⁹ Philadelphia, pp. 222-226.

examinations but also in cases of discipline. The Synod had made it clear in 1763 that a candidate's primary responsibility was to his presbytery, rather than to the Synod itself.¹⁸⁰ There were relatively few errant candidates, but when the need arose the presbyteries did not hesitate to use their power to rebuke a candidate or suspend him from preaching.¹⁸¹ Cases ran from a candidate's illegally performing marriages¹⁸² to a candidate's own marriage to an unbaptized girl. In this latter case, even though the young man knew that his wife planned to be baptized at the first opportunity following the wedding, and, in fact, had been baptized, the presbytery ruled that he had given "considerable offense"; for him to have married "a person before she had a visible standing in the Church was wrong & offensive".¹⁸³

f. Dismissal

On one occasion the Synod dissolved a pastoral relation,¹⁸⁴ but only after the matter had been referred by the minister's presbytery for determination.¹⁸⁵ The authority for the dismissal of a minister from his pastorate and/or presbytery lay with the presbyteries. On occasion a presbytery would determine it best for a pastor to remain with his congregation, even though he desired desperately to be released.¹⁸⁶

One of the most impressive examples of orderly procedure during this period was

¹⁸⁰ Records, p. 325.

¹⁸¹ Note the action of the Presbytery of Donegal in the case of Samuel Kennedy, Supra, pp. 287-288.

¹⁸² Lancaster, p. 117. The presbytery stated that "according to our Constitution it is not regular for candidates to Solemnize Marriage".

¹⁸³ New Castle, III, p. 347.

¹⁸⁴ Records, p. 345.

¹⁸⁵ Lancaster, p. 113.

¹⁸⁶ Cf. Suffolk, pp. 135-137, 155, [158]; New Castle, IV, pp. 158-168.

the method in which ministers would leave pastorates to become college and academy presidents or teachers. Several such instances appear,¹⁸⁷ and in each case the trustees of the institution would lay a formal call before the minister's presbytery for consideration. When, in 1767, the Trustees of the College of New Jersey presented a call to the Presbytery of New Castle for John Blair to become a professor, Blair left the whole matter to the presbytery. It was determined that it was his duty to accept, and the pastoral relation to his congregation was dissolved.¹⁸⁸

The best illustration is the call of the Trustees to Samuel Finley to become president of the College of New Jersey. It was presented to the Presbytery of New Castle in June of 1761, but the representatives of Finley's congregation protested. In its determination, the presbytery was sorry to be faced with the consideration of losing him; yet "a Minister's Relation to the Church in general requires his being fix'd in the most extensive sphere of usefulness, to which he is regularly Call'd, and therefore will justify his Removal from a less, to a more extensively useful situation". Upon hearing this decision, the congregation indicated that it would appeal to the Synod. As was normal, it was ordered that the appeal must be lodged with the presbytery; and it must be done "within ten Days from this Time".¹⁸⁹ It is instructive to note that even though the congregation was appealing against the decision, the presbytery ruled that Finley was free to begin his work at the college. A presbytery's decision was to take effect, even when an orderly appeal was being made against that decision, and it would be binding until reversed by the higher court. In this case, the appeal was never processed, and Finley was received in December of that year as a member of the Presbytery of New Brunswick, in whose bounds

¹⁸⁷ Hanover, I, pp. 8a-9a, II, pp. 104-105; Donegal, pp. 412-413.

¹⁸⁸ New Castle, III, pp. 163-164.

¹⁸⁹ Ibid., p. 25.

the college was located, by producing his certificate of dismissal from New Castle. ¹⁹⁰

E. Control of congregations

As in the earlier periods, a local congregation was part of the whole Church by virtue of its membership in and subjection to its presbytery. There were, however, several measures adopted during the years prior to the formation of the General Assembly that made more orderly this participation.

1. Calls

The practice of presenting calls to a presbytery for approval was absolutely established. Although they never exercised it, at least two of the presbyteries explicitly indicated that they had the authority to order a minister, or candidate, to accept a call to a congregation when it was against his wishes. ¹⁹¹ In another case, when two calls were presented to the Presbytery of New Brunswick for one of its members, the presbytery, itself, decided which he should accept, and when the 'losing' congregation protested, the presbytery allowed the minister, himself, to decide. He accepted the presbytery's original choice. ¹⁹² Occasionally, a presbytery would refuse permission to a church that wished to call a particular man. ¹⁹³ And a congregation continued to be required to receive the approval of its presbytery before presenting a call to another presbytery for one of its members.

Presbyteries made diligent investigation into the terms of a call before it was presented to a minister or candidate. This usually meant a conference between a committee of the presbytery and representatives of the church. Sometimes the terms

¹⁹⁰ New Brunswick, pp. 99-100.

¹⁹¹ Hanover, I, p. 119a; New Brunswick, pp. 84-85.

¹⁹² New Brunswick, pp. 203, 205, 212-213.

¹⁹³ New Castle, III, p. 78; Suffolk, pp. 126-127. Cf. Philadelphia, pp. 92-93 and Records, p. 373.

were not as adequate as they had appeared on paper. In December, 1761 a committee of the Presbytery of New Castle met with representatives of the new congregation at Baltimore. The church had wanted to present a call for Patrick Alison, offering a salary of £100 a year. But, upon looking into the matter, the committee discovered that the people actually would promise no more of this sum "than they shou'd Collect". Moreover, the amount was to be reviewed each year; if the subscriptions fell, then Alison would have to accept the decrease, but if the subscriptions rose above £100 the extra money was to go toward lowering the congregation's subscriptions! "The Committee having consider'd all these Proposals concluded they cou'd not offer them to Mr Alison at all". ¹⁹⁴

The Presbytery of Suffolk had made clear in the case of Ebenezer Prime that a pastor did not have authority to overrule the determination of his congregation in the calling of an 'assistant' ¹⁹⁵ when permission had been granted by presbytery. A similar situation arose in the Presbytery of Philadelphia over the Philadelphia Second Church's desire to call an assistant, since the poor health of their pastor, Gilbert Tennent, would not allow him to perform the whole work of his ministry. ¹⁹⁶ In the autumn of 1762 Tennent had moderated a congregational meeting at which an overwhelming majority of his people voted to call George Duffield as assistant; but Tennent was quite unhappy with the situation and appealed to the presbytery that the vote was "irregular". The presbytery made a thorough investigation and could find no irregularity. In approving the call, the presbytery laid down some important principles: the feelings and position of a settled pastor need to be taken into

¹⁹⁴ New Castle, III, p. 33.

¹⁹⁵ It is obvious from the few instances of churches with 'Assistant Ministers' during the colonial period that these men were not 'assistants' in the present-day usage. They were never merely assistants to the pastor, but what today would be termed 'Associate Ministers' or perhaps even 'Co-pastors'.

¹⁹⁶ Philadelphia, p. 42.

consideration when an assistant is to be elected, "yet the Right of Election is in the Members of Such a Congregation where a Minister or Assistant is to be chosen &...no minister or others [in the congregation] ought to have a Negative on a Congregation in so weighty and interesting affair". And further, since the settlement of any pastor, or assistant in any congregation is "under the Care and government of the Presbytery, [and therefore] a new Member is introduced into the Presbytery, they Judge it the Duty of such congregations to apply for their Direction & approbation in Seeking & obtaining Such Minister or Assistant". 197

During the early years of the colonial period presbyteries occasionally had sent one of their members to preside in a congregational meeting for the purpose of drawing up a call; but the practice had not been consistent. The wisdom of the procedure suggested itself more and more and during the period now under consideration became normal; 198 occasionally, an entire committee would perform the function. 199 In 1764 the Presbytery of New Castle made it a requirement:

it is agreed that Vacant Congregations shall, previous to their preparing a Call to any Candidate or Minister, apply to the Presby. for the appointment of a Member to preside in their publick Vote, & signing of their Call, who shall certify to the Presby, to which it is to be presented, the Regularity of the Vote, and Clearness of the Call. 200

2. Discipline

In cases of personal morals the presbyteries continued to receive a large number of appeals from the decisions of local sessions. The presbyterial actions ranged from the upholding of a sentence of suspension on the operator of a dancing school 201

197 Ibid., pp. 38-41.

198 Cf. Hanover, II, p. 157; New Castle, II, p. 225, IV, p. 243.

199 Cf. Second Philadelphia, p. 45; Donegal, p. 294.

200 New Castle, III, p. 78.

201 Lexington, p. 8.

to the determination in two unusual cases of sexual promiscuity. The Presbytery of Donegal was told in 1761 that though a certain single girl had given birth to a child, she maintained that "she never knew Man (according to ye usual meaning of that Phrase) before she found her self with child".²⁰² The other affair was quite similar. A local session refers to the Presbytery of Hanover in 1767 the case of a young woman who has given birth to a child, but has sworn before a civil magistrate, "that she never knew a Man to her Knowledge, being proved to be a heavy Sleeper". She is suspicious, however, of her brother-in-law, "having dreamed that he had carnal Knowledge of her once". The presbytery tells her that she is "guilty of equivocatory Evasions in this Matter, & that she shall be debarred from church Privileges.....".²⁰³

On occasion, a presbytery would receive a request to determine in thesi, matters that effected discipline. The Presbytery of Hanover, in response to the 1763 request of a local session, "desiring their Judgment & Advice in the Cases of dancing and shooting-matches--The Pby, having considered the affairs, judge, that these exercises are generally of evil Tendency, & ought to be discouraged".²⁰⁴ And when a member of a local congregation lost an appeal to the Presbytery of Donegal, from his session, and reacted to the presbytery in a vindictive manner, it was ordered "that he submit to be rebuked & admonished by our Moderator for exhibiting, without foundation, such heavy charges against a Judicature of Jesus Christ".²⁰⁵

3. Uniting and transfer

The presbyteries made more explicit the authority that they had exercised in all

²⁰² Donegal, p. 49.

²⁰³ Hanover, I, p. 103a.

²⁰⁴ Ibid., p. 65a.

²⁰⁵ Donegal, p. 316.

the past periods: the merging of congregations,²⁰⁶ organization of new churches,²⁰⁷ and the separation of congregations that had been linked together in union.²⁰⁸

An example of wise presbyterial action was a linking of churches by the Presbytery of New Castle in 1780. Because the Lancaster congregation was so small the Leacock congregation asked the presbytery to dissolve the union between them; Lancaster could not support a minister, according to the representatives of Leacock, who were anxious to issue a call. For this purpose Leacock asked to be united with the Middle Octorara church. Representatives of the Lancaster group told the presbytery that the congregation would dissolve if its union with Leacock were not continued and asked that all three churches be linked, with its people receiving one-fifth of a minister's time, the other two, two-fifths each. Therefore, the presbytery linked the three, granting that a minister called to the parish should preach every fifth Sunday at Lancaster. This was for the other two congregations "a necessary and Christian Duty", and in consequence of such an arrangement "the Presbytery will exempt their Minister either wholly, or chiefly from supplying..., by which Means, Leacock and Middle Octorara will each of them, lack but one Sabbath in the Half Year, more than they would do, if Lancaster was not united with them at all".²⁰⁹

The matter of the transfer of a church from one presbytery to another lay in the hands of the Synod. When in 1762 the West Nottingham congregation asked its presbytery, New Castle, to dismiss it to the Presbytery of Donegal, the presbytery replied that "it properly belongs to the Synod to determine in that Matter".²¹⁰

²⁰⁶ Cf. Ibid., p. 354.

²⁰⁷ Cf. New Castle, III, p. 237.

²⁰⁸ Cf. New Brunswick, p. 158.

²⁰⁹ New Castle, IV, pp. 149-150.

²¹⁰ New Castle, III, p. 42.

The Synod received several requests directly from congregations to be transferred to a different presbytery, with approval ²¹¹ and refusal ²¹² being evenly divided. Only on one occasion did a presbytery presume to dismiss a church without seeking approval from the Synod. ²¹³

4. Local sessions

Sessions were subservient to the decisions of their presbyteries, and the Synod. In a conflict with the Synod the ruling elders of the Third Church of Philadelphia were told in 1772 if they "cannot consistently with what they apprehend to be their duty.... act upon the decisions of Synod, that they may resign their office, and the congregation proceed to choose other elders who may have freedom to act according to the determinations of the Synod". ²¹⁴ The Second Presbytery of Philadelphia, in referring to the responsibilities of a local session, said in 1764 that the session is to order the "public Concernes [of the congregation] according to the word of God, & agreeably to the Mode of Discipline, exercised in ye various Congregations under the Care of our Synod, being always subject in their Decisions to the Determination of the Presbytery to which they belong". ²¹⁵

The presbyteries worked closely with the local elders in matters concerning the well-being of the churches ²¹⁶ and were anxious to strengthen the exercise of

²¹¹ Records, pp. 398, 409, 479.

²¹² Ibid., pp. 310, 397, 432.

²¹³ New Brunswick, p. 232.

²¹⁴ Records, p. 435.

²¹⁵ Second Philadelphia, p. 12.

²¹⁶ A survey of the congregations of the Presbytery of Hanover in 1768 disclosed that there was an average of fifty families and eight ruling elders in its churches. Hanover, I, pp. 117a-118a.

discipline at the congregational level.²¹⁷ Yet presbyteries did not hesitate to reverse decisions of their sessions when it was found to be necessary.²¹⁸ Session record-books were examined regularly, and in the correction of these local minutes the presbyteries were able to ensure more orderly proceedings in their congregations. Occasionally, a session was negligent with its records and would be reproved by its presbytery. In August of 1761 the Presbytery of Donegal, finding the minutes of a congregation missing, said that it "cannot but, with Concern, reflect upon ye Indolence of the Session, that they take no better care of their affairs, than to suffer their Records to be they know not where, and their Matters to lie they know not how".²¹⁹

In April of 1779 the Pitt's Grove congregation lodged charges with the Presbytery of Philadelphia against their pastor, Nehemiah Greenman. Among other things, Greenman had refused to call together the church's session for several years, even though he had been asked repeatedly to do so. The presbytery judged that "the very being of Presbyterian Government, & the Peace & Order of Congregations depends on the keeping up a Session, & seasonably calling & consulting them".²²⁰ The same presbytery, in 1770, had adopted a proposal for the choosing of "but one Session" for two separate congregations under its care which were being linked together under one pastor.²²¹

One of the growing questions in the church was whether or not ruling elders should

²¹⁷ The Presbytery of Transylvania in 1786 called for its sessions to make annual report regarding the condition of church life in their congregations, "that any disorders taking place may be rectified before they become incurable". Minutes, Presbytery of Transylvania (hereafter, in this chapter, Transylvania), p. 133 (pagination follows Sweet).

²¹⁸ Cf. Philadelphia, p. 190.

²¹⁹ Donegal, p. 51.

²²⁰ Philadelphia, p. 214. The Presbytery of New Brunswick ruled in 1767 that Charles McKnight's expulsion of a deacon, from office, without judicial process, was "an arbitrary, unconstitutional & abusive Measure, and that therefore it is to be esteem'd as invalid, and that Mr. Imlay is by no means deprived of his office by it". New Brunswick, pp. 240-241.

²²¹ Ibid., p. 123.

be ordained. The Synod ruled in 1765 that the election of elders by a congregation was sufficient authority for their taking office,²²² but in several presbyteries great value was seen in some form of the visible setting apart of these men, following their election by the people. This became an especially important source of union between presbyteries and their vacant churches. As early as 1766 the Presbytery of Hanover ordered one of its members to preach and "to ordain Elders in the Congregation on Roanoke in Augusta....",²²³ and, in the same year, the Presbytery of Carlisle appointed a member to ordain elders in one of its vacancies.²²⁴ Four years later, Hanover appointed a member to ordain three elders in a vacant congregation and to "admit" a fourth into "the Church Eldership of said Congregation, he having been ordained an Elder before he came hither".²²⁵ This is probably the earliest instance of a service of installation for a ruling elder.

When the Presbytery of New Brunswick wrote to one of its members, who was carrying on missionary activity in Nova Scotia, it told him to be certain that there were ruling elders and deacons chosen in the congregations he was serving, and that following their election he should "then proceed to set them apart for their Offices".²²⁶ Apparently members of a local session could not simply demit their office if they wished. In 1764 all eight members of a session found it necessary to petition the Presbytery of New Castle "that they may be dismissed from their office".²²⁷ As the

²²² Records, p. 345.

²²³ Hanover, I, p. 84a.

²²⁴ Carlisle, p. 170. Cf. also pp. 173, 174.

²²⁵ Hanover, II, p. 21.

²²⁶ New Brunswick, p. 277. This letter calls in question Trinterud's contention that deacons "were never ordained". Cf. Trinterud, op. cit., p. 340, n. 22. The Presbyteries of Lexington, Cf. p. 21; and Transylvania, Cf. pp. 132-133 both called for the election of deacons as well as ruling elders.

²²⁷ New Castle, III, p. 83.

formation of the General Assembly approached there would be new moves for a systematic approach to the ordination of local church officers.

5. "Christian education"

The Synod in 1785 passed a far-reaching and important act. Each presbytery was to see that all vacant congregations in its bounds were "carefully catechized" at least once a year, in the same way that settled churches were catechized, annually, by their pastors. Moreover, "the ministers appointed to this duty [shall] be required at the next meeting of the[ir] Presbytery, to render an account of their fidelity in this respect, and that the Presbyteries be required to render an account of their attention to this order at the next meeting of Synod". ²²⁸

The Presbytery of Hanover was able to carry out the provision in a number of its vacancies, but found that the situation of others "renders it impracticable in some instances.....". ²²⁹ The Presbytery of Lexington responded by preparing "a plan for the Direction of Vacant Societies". The presbytery each year would send supplies to "catechise their Children and administer the Lords Supper in all Societies who will subject themselves to the presbyterian Discipline". ²³⁰ New Castle was enthusiastic: "The Presbytery have comply'd with ye. order of Synod, to catechize their vacant Congregations as faras they could, and are heartily disposed to persevere in the practice of it". ²³¹ And the Presbytery of Transylvania moved a degree beyond the intention of the Synod with an interesting plan:

.....catechists shall be appointed for the purpose of instructing the

²²⁸ Records, p. 513. The Synod in 1766 had required pastors to report to their presbyteries concerning their faithfulness in catechizing their own people. Ibid, p. 359.

²²⁹ Hanover, III, p. 13.

²³⁰ Lexington, pp. 21-22.

²³¹ New Castle, IV, p. 271.

young & ignorant, but...no person shall be appointed to this office till he is first nominated by a pastor or minister of the gospel, examined & approved of by Presby; & ...he shall not by virtue of this appointment attempt to expound the Scriptures, preach the gospel or dispense the sealing ordinances thereof. ²³²

The 1785 Synod also called for the establishing of a school in conjunction with each church, and "that they make the erection and care of schools a part of their congregational business.....". A detailed plan was presented for the regular inspection of these schools by congregations and presbyteries; again, this was to be done in vacancies as well as in churches with settled pastors. ²³³ But little was done in the matter before 1788.

6. Church finances

By a number of acts the Synod and presbyteries of this period systematized congregational collections for the support of all phases of the church's life.

a. Collections

The Synod in 1766 adopted a plan prepared by a number of ruling elders from the Philadelphia area. This came to be known as the "Lay Elders' Plan"; among other things it called for each church to appoint a committee "who shall twice in every year collect the minister's stipend, and lay his receipts before the Presbytery preceding the Synod". ²³⁴ The proposals were elaborated by the elders and adopted the following year, ²³⁵ and during the next few years there was evidence of a real attempt to implement the various aspects of the plan, especially those dealing with congregational collections. ²³⁶

²³² Transylvania, p. 131.

²³³ Records, p. 513.

²³⁴ Ibid., pp. 358-359. A similar plan had been adopted by the Presbytery of Carlisle, Cf. p. 176, a month prior to this meeting of Synod.

²³⁵ Records, p. 371.

²³⁶ Cf. New Brunswick, p. 365; Philadelphia, p. 123; Hanover, II, pp. 158-159; New Castle, III, pp. 214, 247, 265; Records, pp. 402, 415, 425.

1766 also saw the Synod appoint a collection "to raise a fund for the propagation and support of the gospel in such parts as cannot otherwise enjoy it", the money to be brought to the following Synod by the moderator or clerk of each presbytery.²³⁷ When a check was made in 1767, the presbyteries had collected £112:1:3,²³⁸ and the Synod appointed a similar collection to be taken annually for missions and "such other pious uses as frequently occur". The presbyteries were to take charge of these collections, which were to be made in all congregations. Each presbytery was to have a treasurer, who was to keep complete accounts, as well as a list of those churches which had failed to contribute; the Synod was to appoint a "general treasurer" who was to receive the monies from his presbyterial counterparts. Each year the Synod was to publish a full account of receipts and disbursements to be distributed to all the congregations, "that so they may have the satisfaction of knowing to what purposes their donations were applied".²³⁹ The presbyteries fulfilled this commission well,²⁴⁰ and the Synod continued energetically to press the collection throughout the remainder of the period.²⁴¹

b. Ministerial support

We have noted the Synod's injunction upon the presbyteries to obtain regular

²³⁷ Records, p. 361. Cf. Philadelphia, pp. 100-101. This presbytery collected £28:10:6.

²³⁸ Records, p. 368.

²³⁹ Ibid., p. 370. During these years the funds were used primarily for missionary activity. The mission of John Brainard to Indians, Cf. Ibid., pp. 371, 453, was maintained annually. Missionaries were supported in Virginia, the Carolinas, and Georgia, Cf. Ibid., pp. 374, 403, 405, 474. The Synod had approved in 1774 the sending of two Negro converts to Africa "to propagate Christianity in their native country". But the plan was halted by the war. Ibid., pp. 456, 458-459.

²⁴⁰ Cf. Suffolk, p. 130; New Brunswick, p. 247; Philadelphia, p. 146; New Castle, III, p. 175; Second Philadelphia, p. 55.

²⁴¹ In 1784 twelve of the Synod's sixteen presbyteries handed in £173:2:2 from the congregational collection. Records, p. 538.

reports from settled congregations regarding their faithfulness in fulfilling the terms of ministerial calls. Actually, several presbyteries had followed the practice before this synodical order was issued. The Presbytery of Philadelphia established in 1760 an annual spring review of congregational accounts, "that we may judge how far Covenants are fulfilled which are committed to our Trust", ²⁴² and the following year the presbytery ordered the Moderator to write a letter to each session "in our Bounds, to let them know our Agreement to see the Covenant betwixt Congregations and their Ministers performed". ²⁴³ There was an extensive report to the presbytery from most of its churches, the following spring; the Piles Grove congregation gave this "State of their Accounts": "To the Revd Presbytery &c. The present Situation of the People & Minister of Piles grove relating to the Min. of the Presby for Settling their accounts once a Year &c. The Year being out the 5th of December 1761 we adjusted our Accounts as follows viz. Salary due £13.14.4. Wheat due 72 Bushels. The house is inclosed. the 50 Acres of Land bought[.] 10 Acres proposed to be cleared". ²⁴⁴

The war brought great hardship to congregations and their pastors. The Presbytery of Philadelphia at its April, 1780 meeting took into consideration the depreciation of currency and directed its vacant churches that "in paying their supplies, they make wheat the Standard". ²⁴⁵ And with regard to a member of one of the congregations in the Presbytery of Suffolk who refused to contribute, the presbytery laid down a significant ruling; for such a person "to withhold his or her due Proportion of Temporals, from the Support of the Gospel Ministry, is a censurable Crime". For

²⁴² Philadelphia, p. 18.

²⁴³ Ibid., pp. 22-23.

²⁴⁴ Ibid., p. 32. Cf. South Carolina, p. 14; Donegal, p. 405.

²⁴⁵ Philadelphia, p. 218.

anyone else to attempt to encourage other members to follow the same course, "by any direct, or indirect Methods whatsoever, is a Crime of a very aggravated Nature".²⁴⁶

Arrears owed to ministers continued to plague the church, and the presbyteries devoted no small amount of effort to seeing that they were paid.²⁴⁷ When the Presbytery of Philadelphia was faced with a minister whose people owed him over £50 in salary, it called upon the session, diaconate, and congregation to provide their minister with love, union, harmony, and firewood.²⁴⁸

Vacant charges also were delinquent, in paying their supplies. The Presbytery of Hanover, in 1772, directed those congregations who had been in arrears to James Campbell, a candidate who recently had died, to forward the money owed, to his parents.²⁴⁹ And the Presbytery of Redstone refused, in 1786, to continue providing supplies for one of its vacancies, since the people had made no effort to pay a previous minister what they owed him for his labors among them.²⁵⁰

The presbyteries made great strides in guaranteeing that honorably retired ministers would be supported adequately. A number of such cases arose, and in each instance the minister's presbytery played a commanding role in making certain that an equitable agreement was made with his old congregation. There was also subsequent supervision to make certain that the obligations were fulfilled.²⁵¹ In

²⁴⁶ Suffolk, p. 81.

²⁴⁷ Cf. New Brunswick, p. 362; Philadelphia, p. 46; New Castle, III, pp. 146-147.

²⁴⁸ Philadelphia, p. 207.

²⁴⁹ Hanover, II, p. 45.

²⁵⁰ Redstone, p. 340.

²⁵¹ Cf. Suffolk, p. 173; Donegal, p. 312.

October of 1766 the Presbytery of New Brunswick heard the request of an aged minister, James McCrea, to be retired after serving the Bedminster church for twenty-seven years. The presbytery said that since he had spent the "Vigor of his Days" with this congregation, "it is reasonable [that] the Congregation sho'd contribute something annually, in an honorable & generous Manner for his support in the Remaining Part of his Life". The people concurred, saying that a faithful minister ought, "by the Rules of Justice, Equity & Religion to be supported by those who have enjoy'd his Labours". Only then did the presbytery dissolve the pastoral relation.²⁵² In the same way, the presbyteries were careful to see that the families of deceased ministers were suitably cared for, and that congregations made up any arrears that had been due their pastor before his death.²⁵³

c. Church property

It is evident that during the colonial period the higher judicatories of the church did not understand their authority over local churches to touch the realm of church property. At the 1765 Synod, in an appeal involving the Presbytery of New Castle and some of its congregations, the presbytery told the Synod that "they never intended to meddle with the civil property of their meeting-houses.....".²⁵⁴ And the Second Presbytery of Philadelphia ruled in 1771 that a claim to church property is "a matter not determinable by a Church Judicature".²⁵⁵ Such authority would have to wait until a later period.

7. Pastoral Letters

During the period from 1758 to 1788 the Synod of New York and Philadelphia

²⁵² New Brunswick, pp. 222-226. The presbytery maintained a watch on the congregation's faithfulness, Cf. pp. 317-318. McCrea died in May of 1769. Cf. p. 319.

²⁵³ Cf. Lewes, p. 1; Donegal, p. 304; New Castle, III, pp. 7, 11; New Brunswick, pp. 326, 363.

²⁵⁴ Records, p. 347.

²⁵⁵ Second Philadelphia, p. 99.

addressed four pastoral letters to all the congregations within its bounds. A letter written by the Synod in 1766 deals mainly with civil matters: the recent French and Indian War; the decline of religion; the blessing of having "the paternal tenderness of the best of kings, and the moderation of the British Parliament". The people are called upon to recommit themselves to the Christian faith and way of life, and not to forget "to honour your king, and pay a due submission to his august parliament....A spirit of liberty is highly laudable when under proper regulations, but we hope you will carefully distinguish between liberty and licentiousness". ²⁵⁶

The second letter came in 1772 and was an expression of thanks to the various congregations for their support in the annual collections and of encouragement to further fidelity in this area. It again called all its members to a new zeal in faith and love, "that it may appear to the world that you are not only one body, but of one mind. We exhort you in a particular manner to diligence and faithfulness in instructing your children and servants in the doctrine of the Holy Scriptures, an excellent summary of which is contained in the Westminster Confession of Faith, larger and lesser catechisms". ²⁵⁷

In 1775 a lengthy letter is composed by the Synod on the eve of the War of Independence, issuing a strong call for personal and national confession and repentance. The Synod proclaims that "we have not been instrumental in inflaming the minds of the people, or urging them to acts of violence and disorder". While the Synod senses that the impending struggle is unavoidable and, therefore, calls its members to courage, at the same time, they are to "express...attachment and respect to our sovereign King George.....who has probably been misled into the late and present measures by those about him". The court is happy to be able to say "that no part

²⁵⁶ Records, pp. 362-363. The immediate occasion was the repeal of the Stamp Act.

²⁵⁷ Ibid., p. 430.

of America would either have approved or permitted such insults as have been offered to the sovereign in Great Britain". There must be a reformation of the evils of every day living. We must pray for the Continental Congress and "adhere firmly to their resolutions". So also there should be "a spirit of candour, charity, and mutual esteem" shown for those of other denominations of the Church. And finally there is a word of advice for those who will have to fight in battle: great care must be taken, since "it is often observed, that civil wars are carried on with a rancour and spirit of revenge much greater than those between independent States..... That man will fight most bravely, who never fights till it is necessary, and who ceases to fight as soon as the necessity is over.....We conclude with our most earnest prayer, that the God of heaven may bless you in your temporal and spiritual concerns, and that the present unnatural dispute may be speedily terminated by an equitable and lasting settlement on constitutional principles". ²⁵⁸

The final synodical letter to its churches came after the end of the war, in 1783. The Synod "cannot help congratulating you on the general and almost universal attachment of the Presbyterian body to the cause of liberty and the right of mankind". The Synod was happy that the conflict did not include religious rancor, and, sensing that some other denominations feared at this time that the Presbyterian Church might become the established faith of the new nation because of its tremendous influence, the Synod set these fears at rest. "No denominations of Christians among us have any reason to fear oppression or restraint, or any power to oppress others. We therefore recommend charity, forbearance, and mutual service. Let the great and only strife be who shall love the Redeemer most, and who shall serve him with the greatest zeal. We recommend the strict exercise of discipline to the societies under our care. Let us not seek to increase our numbers by relaxation, but to justify the excellence of our principles by the inoffensive, exemplary and holy conversation of

²⁵⁸ Ibid., pp. 466-469.

those who embrace them". ²⁵⁹

While the presbyteries on occasion would write a pastoral letter to a single congregation under their care, dealing with matters in that particular church, we have record of only two pastoral letters directed by a presbytery to all its congregations. Both were from the Presbytery of New Castle. At its August, 1778 meeting the presbytery appointed a committee of three ministers "to prepare a Draught of a Pastoral Letter to the Churches under our Care, to be laid before us at our next Meeting", ²⁶⁰ and by October the letter had been written and was read to the presbytery for correction or addition. The same committee, plus one other minister, was appointed to have the letter printed. ²⁶¹ In April, 1779 the committee presented the presbytery with the printed letter, and quotas of copies were assigned to be distributed to

²⁵⁹ "A Pastoral Letter from the Synod of New York and Philadelphia to the people under their charge, May 1783," JPH, V, pp. 127-131. The letter is not included in the Synod's minutes. The Anglican view of the struggle was quite different. In November of 1776 Ambrose Serle wrote to Lord Dartmouth: "The War is...at the Bottom very much a religious War; and every one looks to the Establishment of his own Party upon the Issue of it. And indeed, upon the Issue, some one Party ought to predominate, were it only for the Conservation of Peace. It is perhaps impossible to keep the ecclesiastical Polity out of the Settlement, without endangering the permanency of the civil. There will never be a fairer Opportunity, nor a juster Right, to fix the Constitution of America in all respects agreeable to the Interests and Constitution of Great Britain, than upon the Conclusion of this War". Stevens, Benjamin F., Facsimilies of Manuscripts in European Archives Relating to America, 1773 to 1783, Vol. XXIV, No. 2045.

Five months later the same correspondent wrote that "there must be a great Reform established, ecclesiastical as well as civil; for, though it has not been much considered at Home, Presbyterianism is really at the Bottom of this whole Conspiracy, has supplied it with Vigor, and will never rest, till something is decided upon it". Ibid., Vol. XXIV, No. 2057.

For an example of a presbytery's acting as the authoritative spokesman for all presbyterians in an area, in relation to the civil government, Cf. Hanover, II, pp. 57, 83, 109-110, 169, 175, 177-178, 186. Cf. also the 1776 address of this presbytery to the government of Virginia, printed in Armstrong, M.W., et. al., (eds.), The Presbyterian Enterprise: Sources of American Presbyterian History, Philadelphia, 1956, pp. 90-92.

²⁶⁰ New Castle, IV, p. 131.

²⁶¹ Ibid., pp. 132, 134.

sixteen congregations. ²⁶²

Following the war, New Castle saw the need for another letter to its churches, because of "the decaying Interests of the Church in our bounds". A committee was assigned and presented its product to the presbytery in August of 1784; amendments being made, it was published the following year. This lengthy letter (sixty-two pages) details a plan for reviving religion in the life of a post-war people and calls them to a new piety. Its title concludes: "Published by order of the Presbytery, convened at Upper Octarara, August 11, 1784. William Smith, moderator". ²⁶³ Therefore, the Synod, and at least one presbytery, exercised a unique pastoral oversight during a crucial time in the Colonial church's life, by issuing letters of encouragement and practical advice.

F. New roles for ruling elders

During these years elders came into a greater participation in the work of the church's judicatories. The growing practice of their ordination reflected the added significance which was attached to the office.

In the Synod, elders were a fixed part of the Commission, although its basis still was clerical. During the period the Commission had an average membership of twenty-three ministers and six ruling elders.

In 1768 an elder was ordered to carry on part of the Synod's official correspondence with overseas churches, ²⁶⁴ and an innovation took place three years later when an elder was assigned to a committee hearing charges against a minister, in a reference from one of the presbyteries. ²⁶⁵ Previous to this time there is no

²⁶² Ibid., p. 139. Unfortunately, we do not know what was contained in the letter.

²⁶³ [Presbytery of New Castle], An Address from the Presbytery of New-Castle to the congregations under their care, etc., Wilmington, Delaware, 1785.

²⁶⁴ Records, p. 386. Cf. p. 399.

²⁶⁵ Ibid., p. 414.

record of other than ministers being officially appointed to hear complaints against a minister. Elder representatives were also appointed to the Synod's Committee on Bills and Overtures. ²⁶⁶

A significant act came from the 1786 Synod. Educational requirements for the ministry were to stay high; since this meant a continued shortage of ministers and licentiates, the Synod felt the need to make provision for vacancies that could not be supplied regularly. The Synod enjoined vacant congregations to meet each Lord's Day, "for the purposes of prayer and praises, and reading the Holy Scriptures, together with the works of such approved divines as they may be able to procure". It was ordered that "the elders be the persons who shall pray, and select the portions of Scripture and other books, to be read by any proper person whom they may appoint". ²⁶⁷

In the presbyteries, also, ruling elders found an increasing number of positions of leadership. As in previous periods they were appointed to Committees which were to meet to investigate congregational difficulties; ²⁶⁸ but often they were assigned now in a proportionately larger number, so that it was not unusual for there to be a presbytery committee with three ministers and two ruling elders. ²⁶⁹ In fact, on occasion committees were heavily dominated by elders. In 1786 the Presbytery of Redstone appointed a committee to determine in a case of discipline in a local church, and the committee was composed of one minister and six elders. ²⁷⁰ The Presbytery of New Castle created a committee in 1759 to determine in a dispute between two congregations over their boundaries. The committee was composed of three members, all

²⁶⁶ Cf. Ibid., p. 502.

²⁶⁷ Ibid., p. 526.

²⁶⁸ Cf. Suffolk, p. 154; New Brunswick, p. 103; Donegal, p. 326; New Castle, III, p. 234.

²⁶⁹ Cf. New Castle, IV, p. 278.

²⁷⁰ Redstone, p. 343.

ruling elders. ²⁷¹

In the case before the Presbytery of Philadelphia involving Irwin and his wife, a committee of four was appointed to meet with her "to hear her Allegations, and lay them before the Presbytery"; two of the four were ruling elders. ²⁷² And a long tradition was broken when two elders participated in a committee that was hearing part of a candidate's trials for licensure, although they had come with their ministers and had not been appointed by the presbytery. ²⁷³ In a case of discipline involving one of New Castle's candidates, an elder was appointed to a committee to hear the case, ²⁷⁴ and, when reports came to the Presbytery of South Carolina regarding the misconduct of one of its candidates, "Mr. Patrick Calhoun an elder and member of Presbytery is authorized to repair over the mountains and take what information he can procure on the subject.....". ²⁷⁵

G. The "Model polity"

Trinterud concedes the fact that by 1770 the leadership of the American Presbyterian Church was dominated almost completely by men of immediate Ulster Scot and Scottish extraction. ²⁷⁶ Men such as Alexander McWhorter at Newark, James Caldwell at Elizabethtown, John Rodgers at New York City, and John Witherspoon, president of the College of New Jersey were the leaders who would guide the church to the formation of a polity suited to a new nation. Such molders would draw from their own

²⁷¹ New Castle, III, p. 6.

²⁷² Philadelphia, p. 223.

²⁷³ New Castle, IV, pp. 275, 276.

²⁷⁴ New Castle, III, p. 168.

²⁷⁵ South Carolina, p. 11.

²⁷⁶ Trinterud, op. cit., pp. 221-225.

experience, but the church as a whole had maintained a definite criterion for its church government. This was true both in the Synod and in the individual presbyteries.

In pursuing its correspondence, the Synod in 1769 appointed John Blair to prepare a synodical letter to the Church of Scotland.²⁷⁷ Blair was a former New Side minister, educated at the Log College, who had entered into printed debate with Patrick Allison over the 'spiritual examination' of candidates (Cf. Supra, p. 296). The letter was read to the Synod,²⁷⁸ approved, and directed to the General Assembly. It is not entered in the records of the Synod, but is preserved in the minutes of the Scottish General Assembly. The Synod told the Assembly that after determining to communicate with overseas churches it was found most "natural for them first to turn their eyes to the Church of Scotland, to which they are of all others the most entirely conformed, and, from which indeed they may be said to have derived their origin". The Synod continued:

Many or most of the first Presbyterian Ministers in this Country had their education in Scotland, and formed their infant Societys on the model of your most excellent Constitution; and now, that the body has become more considerable, we continue steadily attached to the same principles.....and the laws and practice of the Church of Scotland have Chief Authority with us in point of Government.²⁷⁹

A 1770 letter to the independent Presbytery of South Carolina indicates the Synod's position:

The Church of Scotland is considered by this Synod as their pattern in general; but we have not as yet expressly adopted by resolution of Synod, or bound ourselves to any other of the standing laws or forms of the Church of Scotland, than those above mentioned [the Westminster Confession of Faith and Catechisms and the Directory for Worship and Government], intending to lay down such rules for ourselves upon Presbyterian principles in general,

²⁷⁷ Records, p. 397.

²⁷⁸ Ibid., p. 399.

²⁷⁹ Mss. minutes, General Assembly of the Church of Scotland, May 29, 1770. The Presbytery of Edinburgh was appointed as a committee of the General Assembly to correspond with the Synod. Cf. minutes for June 4, 1770.

as circumstances should from time to time show to be expedient. 280

On the eve of the formation of the General Assembly the church was carrying on conversations with the Dutch Reformed and Associate Reformed Churches. To them it said:

The rules of our discipline and the form of process in our church judicatures, are contained in Pardovan's (alias Stewart's) collections in conjunction with the acts of our own Synod, the power of which, in matters purely ecclesiastical, we consider as equal to the power of any Synod or General Assembly in the world. Our church judicatures, like those in the church of Scotland, from which we derive our origin, are Church Sessions, Presbyteries, and Synods, to which it is now in contemplation to add a National and General Assembly. 281

There is a number of similar references to the Church of Scotland in the minutes of the presbyteries. In 1770 the Presbytery of Hanover felt that it was necessary, "in these Times of Vice and Irregularity", to draw up "a Declaration of our adherence to the Standards of the Church of Scotland". 282 An anonymous minister submitted some "queries" to the Presbytery of Suffolk in 1766 regarding church government. The presbytery answered by saying that the questions "are either expressly or implicitly Answer'd already in the Directory of the Church of Scotland, to which This Presbytery refer the Querest for satisfaction, as it is a Plan we adhere to as agree[a]ble to the word of God.....". 283

When the Presbytery of New Castle installed Joseph Montgomery, it said that it did so "after the form of the Church of Scotland". 284 And in its letter to a minister in Nova Scotia the Presbytery of New Brunswick encouraged him to erect a presbytery "in Connection with our Synod.--without this, the Churches there will be

280 Records, p. 409.

281 Ibid., p. 519.

282 Hanover, II, p. 22.

283 Suffolk, p. 119.

284 New Brunswick, p. 288.

in a State of Anarchy, [and] there will be no judicial Authority to regulate many things which may arise.....". "We assure you, D[ea]r Sir; The public Standards of the Church of Scotland are our Standards". 285

H. Conclusions

The period from 1758-1788 was productive in the area of polity. The Synod and its presbyteries made extensive improvements not only in their internal organizations, but also in the pastoral and disciplinary nature of their judicial control of ministers, candidates, and congregations. Lines of authority between Synod and presbytery became even more definite, although there was still an amount of overlapping in the exercise of church power. As in earlier periods of American Presbyterianism, the courts were forced to devise new acts and procedures as they carried out their responsibilities, rather than having a well-ordered, written Constitution. Yet this produced a vital and living creativity on the part of the judicatories.

The primary internal division facing the reunited church was rooted in differing concepts of the ministry, which, in turn, derived from divergent understandings of the Church. The desire for a 'spiritual examination' could be traced back in the life of the Synod through the Great Awakening to Jonathan Dickinson. Some of the former Old and New Side men could use this question as a channel into which to pour their unresolved frustrations; but since the idea of the 'spiritual examination' was so ill-defined, it soon ceased to be a rallying point, and the issue died, even though differences in the doctrine of the Church undoubtedly lingered.

Along with more orderly processes in regard to the transfer of ministers and candidates, the presbyteries took up new tasks in the fields of Christian education and church finance. And in the higher courts, especially at the presbytery level, ruling elders were being used to a much greater extent, thus facilitating the corporate action of the church.

285 New Castle, III, p. 220.

According to the church's own statements and procedures, American Presbyterianism had never lost the vision of the Church of Scotland as its 'model' for church organization. By devising and adopting its own detailed Constitution, the church would show whether or not it was faithful to these words and actions.

CHAPTER NINE

The Formation of "The Presbyterian Church in the United States of America"

As early, at least, as 1774 the church recognized the need for a re-forming of its structure. It was recorded as follows: "An overture for resolving this Synod into three Synods was brought in and read; the consideration thereof deferred to our next meeting of Synod."¹ But the War blocked any further action, and it was eleven years before the Synod again settled down to face the need to formalize its organization.

A. The preparations

In 1785 it was overtured that the Synod be divided into three synods, "and that a General Synod, or Assembly, be constituted out of the whole",² but the full consideration of this proposal was deferred until the following year. After debating the division of the Synod, the 1786 session came to this determination: ".....the Synod considering the number and extent of the churches under their care, and the inconvenience of the present mode of government by one Synod, resolved, that this Synod will establish, out of its own body, three or more subordinate Synods, out of which shall be composed a General Assembly...agreeably to a system hereafter to be adopted."³

¹ Records, p. 460. In 1774 the Synod was composed of 139 ministers, 153 congregations with settled pastors, and 180 vacancies. Sweet, William W., Religion on the American Frontier, Vol. II, New York, 1936, pp. 12-19. Sweet lists all the ministers and congregations, drawing his information from Aitken's General American Register for 1774.

² Records, p. 513.

³ Ibid., p. 517. While there is no indication in the Synod's minutes as to the origin of this overture, it is clear from the records of the Presbytery of Hanover that it came from that judicature. Hanover had twenty-five ministers under its jurisdiction when it met in March of 1785 and was anxious to be divided into four smaller presbyteries, within a synod encompassing the whole of Virginia. This was the essence, then, of the overture to the Synod two months later. Cf. Mss. minutes, Presbytery of Hanover (hereafter, in this chapter, Hanover), II, pp. 181-182.

Eleven ministers were appointed to draft a plan for the execution of the order and three days later handed in a lengthy proposal for the realignment of the presbyteries (Cf. Supra, p. 282) and the creation of four synods. The entire church would be bound together by a "judicatory thus constituted [by commissioners delegated from all the presbyteries]...[which] shall bear the style and title of the General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church in the United States of America".⁴

The Synod immediately enacted the presbyterial changes but postponed until 1787 consideration of the formation of the synods and the General Assembly.⁵ In 1787 again it was deferred until the following meeting, 1788, with the stipulation that "the Synod be then divided".⁶

During the four years, 1785-1788, the Synod also engaged in the process of shaping a written form of government by which its polity would be guided and in which its basic principles would be reflected. In 1785 a committee of ten ministers was appointed "to take into consideration the constitution of the church of Scotland, and other Protestant churches, and agreeably to the general principles of Presbyterian government, compile a system of general rules for the government of the Synod, and the several Presbyteries under their inspection, and the people in their communion, and to make report of their proceeding herein at the next meeting of Synod".⁷

At the 1786 session the Synod heard this committee's report and appointed another committee to meet in September with the power "to digest such a system as they shall think to be accommodated to the state of the Presbyterian Church in America". 300 copies of the resultant "book of discipline and government" were to be printed and

⁴ Records, pp. 522-524.

⁵ Ibid., p. 526.

⁶ Ibid., p. 541.

⁷ Ibid., p. 512.

distributed to the presbyteries "in proportion to the number of their members", and the presbyteries were to report to the 1787 Synod "their observations on the said book of government and discipline".⁸ The work printed, following the committee's September meeting, was A Draught of a Plan of Government and Discipline for the Presbyterian Church in North America, etc.

This draft received extensive care at the 1787 meeting, the work being considered "paragraph by paragraph"⁹ for eight days. The minutes give us no hint as to the discussion, but the Synod ordered on the final day of meeting that 1000 copies of the revised draft be printed and distributed to the presbyteries and congregations, for consideration.¹⁰ This revision of the 1786 Draught was published later in 1787 under the title: A Draught of the Form of the Government and Discipline of the Presbyterian Church in the United States of America. The committee appointed to prepare the revision for publication made changes in some of the wording before the draft went to press,¹¹ and in 1788 the Synod spent four days considering this second revision before its final adoption.

B. The basis of the American church's government

Before we turn to an examination of the polity embodied in the Form of Government, it will be instructive to see how it was viewed by the church itself. The Synod said in 1787: "We apprehend there are no principles in it different from the Westminster Directory, only the same rendered more explicit in some things, and more

⁸ Ibid., pp. 524, 525.

⁹ Ibid., p. 533.

¹⁰ Ibid., p. 539.

¹¹ A Draught of the Form of the Government and Discipline, etc., New York, 1787 (hereafter, in this chapter, 1787 Draught), p. ii. These words were indicated by italics. As we quote them, therefore, they are underlined.

conformable to the state and circumstances of the Presbyterian Church in America." ¹²
 It was further stated: "We are Presbyterians, and we firmly believe the Presbyterian system of doctrine, discipline, and church government, to be nearer to the word of God than that of any other sect or denomination of Christians." ¹³

There was a little unhappiness on the part of a very small number of the Synod's members, as they realized that the church was planning to formalize its adherence to the Presbyterian system as it had been propounded in Westminster and practised in Scotland. Jacob Green had withdrawn from the Synod in 1779, primarily because he objected to the Synod's practice of "ordering, appointing and requiring, instead of recommending and desiring". ¹⁴ He claimed that presbyteries should have more autonomy and in 1780, along with three other ministers, formed the "Associated Presbytery of Morris County" in New York State. But the constitution of this body provided for no jurisdiction over its congregations, only advice. ¹⁵ As in similar situations (Cf. Supra, pp. 191-2, 195-6), it was clear that it was not synodical authority, but any consistorial authority, which was being rejected.

Matthew Wilson, though remaining in the church, attempted to have his own Congregational-orientated proposals written into the new polity. He was rejected by the Synod and wrote in 1786 that the Synod, in opposition to his efforts, "will publish Scotts Discipline with some Abatements". ¹⁶ After the Synod's adoption of

¹² Records, pp. 532-533.

¹³ Ibid., p. 533.

¹⁴ Quoted in Nichols, Robert H., Presbyterianism in New York State, Philadelphia, 1963, p. 68.

¹⁵ Ibid.

¹⁶ Cf. Trinterud, Leonard J., The Forming of an American Tradition, etc., Philadelphia, 1949, pp. 286-288; Records, p. 544. These minutes for 1788 record: "A petition from the Rev. Dr. Wilson, detained from Synod through bodily indisposition, respecting the draught of the form of government, &c., was presented and read. Ordered, that it lie on the table."

the final Form of Government in 1788, Wilson wrote: "The Scots' unscriptural Hierarchy was determined beforehand to be adopted." ¹⁷

C. A comparison of the American and Westminster plans for church government

1. Format

The format of "The Form of Government and Discipline of the Presbyterian Church in the United States of America", adopted in 1788, was very similar to that of "The Form of Presbyterian Church-Government" of the Westminster Assembly, which was adopted by the General Assembly of the Church of Scotland in 1645. The outward similarity is striking:

American

Introduction
Of the Church
Of the Officers of the Church
Of Bishops or Pastors

Of Ruling Elders
Of Deacons

Of ordinances in a particular Church
Of Church Government, and the several kinds of Judicatories

Of the Congregational Assembly, or Judicatory, usually styled the Church Session

Of the Presbyterial Assembly
Of the Synodical Assembly
Of the General Assembly
Of Electing and ordaining ruling elders and deacons
Of licensing Candidates, or Probationers, to preach the Gospel
Of the Election, and Ordination of Bishops or Pastors
Of Translation, or removing a Minister from one charge to another
Of resigning a Pastoral Charge
Of Missions [supplies for vacant churches]
Of Moderators
Of Privilege
Of Clerks
Of vacant Congregations assembling for public worship
Of Commissioners to the General Assembly

Westminster

The Preface
Of the Church
Of the Officers of the Church
Pastors
Teacher or Doctor
Other Church-Governors
Deacons
Of particular Congregations
Of the Ordinances in a particular Congregation
Of Church-Government, and the several sorts of Assemblies for the same
Of the Power in common of all these Assemblies
Of Congregational Assemblies, that is, the Meeting of the ruling Officers of a Particular Congregation, for the Government thereof
Of Classical Assemblies
Of Synodical Assemblies
[provision was made in the 1647 Directory for a "National Assembly"]

Of Ordination of Ministers
Touching the Doctrine of Ordination
Touching the Power of Ordination
Concerning the Doctrinal Part of Ordination of Ministers
The Directory for the Ordination of Ministers
Rules for Examination [of ministers]

¹⁷ Quoted in Smith, Elwyn A., The Presbyterian Ministry in American Culture, Philadelphia, 1962, p. 126n.

Even where these headings are not the same, in most instances the American production has simply taken and adapted material from Westminster, grouping it under different titles. But, most important, beyond the external form there lay a great correspondence in the application of Presbyterian principles.

2. Nature of the Church

While the Westminster Form began by stating in its preface that Jesus Christ is the foundation of the Church, the American Form used its introduction to establish the principles which must guide a church in a situation where there is no direct connection between church and civil government. But, this having been said, the American church declared that a church had the right and responsibility to order "the whole system of its internal government, which Christ hath appointed".¹⁸ Moreover, the Americans underlined their Presbyterian presuppositions:

...our blessed Saviour, for the edification of the visible Church, which is his body, hath appointed officers, not only to preach the Gospel and administer the Sacraments; but also to exercise discipline, for the preservation both of truth and duty: and, that it is incumbent upon these officers, and upon the whole Church, in whose name they act, to censure, or cast out, the erroneous and scandalous; observing in all cases, the rules contained in the word of God.¹⁹

The American production places in the chapter "Of the Church" the affirmation of Christ's Headship that begins the Westminster Form. Then both go on to describe the Church in almost identical terms. Each begins with the universal Church and only then goes on to mention particular congregations; in fact, the American Form seems to make this more explicit than does Westminster. The latter says: "Particular visible churches, members of the general church, are also held forth in the New

¹⁸ The Form of the Government and Discipline of the Presbyterian Church in the United States of America. 1788, In Constitution of the Presbyterian Church....ratified and adopted by the Synod of New-York and Philadelphia....1788, etc., Philadelphia, 1789 (hereafter, in this chapter, 1788 Form), p. cxxxiv.

¹⁹ 1788 Form, p. cxxxiv.

Testament." ²⁰ But the new American discipline states: "As this immense multitude [the universal Church] cannot meet together, in one place.....they should be divided into many particular churches." ²¹

3. Church officers

The brief introductory statement on church officers is nearly identical in the two forms, except that where Westminster lists teachers (doctors) as a perpetual office of the Church, the American order is silent. Yet, while Westminster had approved of teachers preaching and administering the Sacraments, the Church of Scotland had changed this provision, so that preaching, solemnizing marriages, and celebrating the Sacraments did not belong to the teacher in Scotland "except he be called and ordained thereto [as a minister]". ²² The original 1786 Draught had a brief discussion of the place within the Church of doctors and school professors, stating that they were not to be considered as having the authority of ordained pastors, nor by virtue of

²⁰ The Form of Presbyterial Church-Government, and the Ordination of Ministers, etc., in The Confession of Faith, etc., Edinburgh, 1831 (hereafter, in this chapter, Westminster Form), p. 564.

²¹ 1788 Form, p. 137.

²² [Steuart, Walter] of Pardovan's Collections and Observations, etc., Edinburgh, 1773, p. 32. Walter Steuart, of Pardovan, was a Scottish laird who had written his Collections in 1709. It was a compendium of the discipline, government, and worship of the Church of Scotland and, although unofficial, was looked to as a working 'handbook' on such matters. It was used during the period under consideration in much the same manner as James Cox's Practice and Procedure is today. Robert Wodrow referred to it as giving "the fullest view of our discipline and practice of any thing I could think upon" when he sent a copy to Benjamin Colman in Boston. Wodrow, Robert, The Correspondence of, Vol. II, Edinburgh, 1843, letter CLI, p. 463.

We have noted (Cf. Supra, p. 332) that the Synod had considered it a guide for its own order. During the deliberations on a form of government, the Synod, in 1787, adopted Steuart's book as a working basis, but then reversed the action, surely seeing that the American situation called for a number of adaptations. Cf. Records, p. 535.

The edition of the Collections to which we make reference had been published in 1773 and therefore had been available to the American Church just at the time when considerations for formalizing its organization were being initiated. It certainly was before the leaders of the church as they produced the new Form of Government.

their "office alone to be members of any of the judicatures of the church";²³ this, too, was in accordance with the Scottish mode.²⁴ But no mention of doctors or teachers was made in the 1787 and 1788 American editions, with the implication that it was not felt necessary to mention them within the framework of the church's polity.

The American church believed that it would be well to retain the title "Bishop" for its pastors, and while its use became less frequent in the progressive revisions between 1786 and 1788 the term still was used in the final edition. The section "Of Bishops or Pastors" was shorter than its Westminster counterpart and, while actually consisting of the same elements, was one of the few literary improvements over Westminster. The 1788 Form began: "The pastoral office is the first, in the church, both for dignity and usefulness."²⁵

When it came to ruling elders and deacons there were few, if any differences. Both the Westminster and American books gave very brief sections on both offices. With the diaconate there was one divergence. Westminster said that to the deacon's "office it belongs not to preach the word, or administer the sacraments....";²⁶ on the other hand, the 1786 Draught had thought that it might be well for deacons to assist "the other officers of the church in distributing...[the elements of the Lord's Supper] to the communicants".²⁷ By the following year the American plan had done an about-face, stating that the deacon was "not to administer any of the ordinances of the Gospel.....",²⁸ and thus bringing itself in line with Westminster.

²³ A Draught of a Plan of Government and Discipline for the Presbyterian Church in North America, Philadelphia, 1786 (hereafter, in this chapter, 1786 Draught), p. 8.

²⁴ [Steuart], op. cit., p. 33.

²⁵ 1788 Form, p. 138.

²⁶ Westminster Form, p. 572.

²⁷ 1786 Draught, p. 9.

²⁸ 1787 Draught, p. 9.

But when the final form was adopted the following year, the entire matter was omitted.²⁹

Westminster had made no provision for the ordination of elders and deacons, but the American church produced a new chapter, dealing with the matter. The 1786 draught had made no such proposal, and some of the presbyteries, in studying the plan, requested that a form be provided. At its meeting on April 27, 1787 the Presbytery of Hanover made lengthy observations about the draft and requested the Synod that the new form "prescribe a particular mode for the Ordination of ruling Elders and Deacons".³⁰ The 1787 Draught adopted this recommendation in the form of the chapter "Of Electing and Ordaining Ruling Elders and Deacons", which found its way into the final Form of 1788. It said, in part:

When any person shall have been elected to either of these offices, and shall have declared his willingness to accept thereof, he shall be set apart in in [sic] the following manner.

[Here follow four questions, requiring affirmation of belief in the Scriptures, adoption of the Westminster Confession of Faith, acceptance of the Form of Government, and faithfulness in the office.]

After having answered these questions in the affirmative, he shall be set apart, by prayer, to the office of Elder (or deacon as the case may be;) and the Minister shall give him, and the congregation, an exhortation suited to the occasion.³¹

Here was ordination by prayer, but without the imposition of hands. While a similar provision had not been made at Westminster, it should be noted that such was the practice of the Church of Scotland, with regard, at least, to elders, who the pastor was to "ordain by prayer".³² Westminster had seemed to indicate that

²⁹ 1788 Form, p. 140.

³⁰ Hanover, III, p. 10. There is evidence in the minutes of several presbyteries that the drafts were considered at their meetings, but usually there are few details. For example, Redstone recorded in April, 1787 that it "proceeded to read and consider the plan of government and discipline proposed by the committee of the Synod...and find many things which should be altered, and many omitted, which, we apprehend, ought to be in a draught of church discipline". Minutes of the Presbytery of Redstone (pagination follows Smith), pp. 350-351.

³¹ 1788 Form, pp. 149-150.

³² Cox, James T., Practice and Procedure in the Church of Scotland (Fifth Edition), Edinburgh, 1964, p. 129. Cf. Wotherspoon, H.J. and Kirkpatrick, J.M., A Manual of Church Doctrine according to the Church of Scotland (Second Edition), London, 1960, p. 101.

the authority of ruling elders was to be considered as an expansion of the church authority which rested with ministers of the word. Ministers, therefore, were considered "teaching or preaching as well as ruling elders, the others being 'ruling elders' only".³³ The American church followed this lead and made the distinction even more definite, stating in its Form of Government: "Ruling Elders are properly the representatives of the people, chosen by them, for the purpose of exercising government and discipline, in conjunction with Pastors or Ministers."³⁴

4. Authority of church judicatories

Both orders reach the same conclusion as to the exercise of church government by a system of church courts, but the 140 years between their production of course meant that the two would approach the subject with differing emphases. Gone from the American polity is any 'intolerance' that was associated with the 'Divine right of presbyteries'.

American

It is absolutely necessary that the government of the church be exercised under some certain and definite form: And we hold it expedient, and agreeable to scripture and the practice of the primitive christians, that the church be governed by congregational, presbyterial, and synodical Assemblies. In full consistency with this belief, we embrace, in the spirit of charity, those christians who differ from us, in opinion or in practice, on these subjects.³⁵

Westminster

Christ hath instituted a government, and governors ecclesiastical in the church: to that purpose, the apostles did immediately receive the keys from the hand of Jesus Christ, and did use them in all the churches of the world upon all occasions.

And Christ hath since continually furnished some in his church with gifts of government, and with commission to execute the same, when called thereunto.

It is lawful, and agreeable to the word of God, that the church be governed by several sorts of assemblies, which are congregational, classical, and synodical.³⁶

³³ Cox, op. cit., p. 110. Cf. Westminster Form, p. 572. Cf. also Wotherspoon and Kirkpatrick, op. cit.

³⁴ 1788 Form, p. 139.

³⁵ Ibid., p. 141.

³⁶ Westminster Form, p. 575. Cf. A Directory for Church-Government, etc., Edinburgh, 1739, in Confession of Faith (hereafter, in this chapter, Westminster Directory), p. 484.

a. Local sessions

The Westminster and the American forms were identical in the authority assigned to church sessions, which had the power "to admonish, to rebuke, to suspend, or exclude, from the sacraments, those who are found to deserve the censures of the church".³⁷ The Americans took their cue directly from the Westminster Divines³⁸ by writing into their constitution: "In Congregations, where there are Colleagues, they shall, when present, alternately preside in the session."³⁹

b. Presbyteries

It is most interesting that the long chapter "Of the Presbyterial Assembly" in the American Form of 1788 underwent only the most minor changes from 1786-1788. And in the section of the chapter which describes "The Powers of the Presbytery" there was not a single change, save in spelling and punctuation, during the entire process of revision. We stand here at the very heart of the new polity and must quote the excellent section at length:

The Presbytery have cognizance of all things, that regard the welfare of the particular churches within their bounds, which are not cognizable by the session. They have also a power of receiving and issuing appeals from the sessions; and references, brought before them in an orderly manner; of examining, and licensing candidates for the gospel ministry; of ordaining, settling, removing, or judging ministers; of examining, and approving or censuring the records of the session; of resolving questions of doctrine or discipline, seriously and reasonably proposed; of condemning erroneous opinions, that injure the purity or peace of the church; of visiting particular churches, to inquire into their state and redress the evils that may have arisen within them; of uniting, or dividing Congregations, at the request of the people; and of ordering what ever pertains to the spiritual concerns of the Churches under their care.⁴⁰

If anything has been omitted from the elaboration of the areas of presbyterial control,

³⁷ 1788 Form, p. 142.

³⁸ Westminster Directory, p. 488, said: "Where there are more fixed Ministers than one in a Congregation, it is expedient that they moderate by Course in that Eldership."

³⁹ 1788 Form, p. 168.

⁴⁰ Ibid., pp. 144-145.

the Form of Government concludes by saying that presbyteries will have charge "of ordering what ever pertains to the spiritual concerns of the Churches under their care". Nothing more could be desired. If anything, the American document is a stronger statement of judicial supervision by presbyteries than was Westminster's.⁴¹

The presbyteries are to have complete control over the church's candidates for the ministry. Following the practice of the Church of Scotland, licensure becomes a fixed necessity: "The holy Scriptures require, that some trial be previously had, of those who are to be ordained to the ministry of the Gospel.....For this purpose Presbyteries shall license Probationers, to preach the Gospel.....".⁴² All the necessary parts of trial to be given by presbyteries are prescribed,⁴³ and, except in the most unusual cases, candidates are to present to the presbyteries a diploma from some recognized institution. Moreover, they shall be required to have spent two additional years studying "divinity" under some approved minister or professor.⁴⁴

A complete form of licensure is given, which the presbyteries are to use after a candidate has answered in the affirmative these questions:

1. Do you believe the scriptures, of the old and new testament, to be the word of God, the only infallible rule of faith and practice?
2. Do you sincerely receive and adopt the confession of faith of this church, as containing the system of doctrine taught in the holy scriptures?

⁴¹ Cf. Westminster Directory, pp. 489-490.

⁴² 1788 Form, p. 150.

⁴³ They were examinations in Latin, Greek, Hebrew, the arts and sciences, natural and revealed theology, and church history. The presbyteries were to require an exegesis (Latin is not mentioned), a sermon, a "presbyterial exercise", a lecture, and a "popular sermon". *Ibid.*, pp. 151-152. Abiding by Westminster, candidates were to be questioned regarding their "experimental acquaintance with religion", but the purpose is for "satisfaction with regard to the piety of such candidates". *Ibid.*, p. 151. There is no hint whatsoever that a testimony to an experience of 'conversion' was to be sought.

For a summary of the examinations for candidates in the Reformed churches of Europe, Cf. Ainslie, James L., The Doctrines of Ministerial Order in the Reformed Church of the 16th and 17th Centuries, Edinburgh, 1940, pp. 147-148.

⁴⁴ 1788 Form, pp. 151-152.

3. Do you promise to study the peace, unity, and purity of the church?
4. Do you promise to submit yourself, in the Lord, to the government of this Presbytery, or of any other Presbytery in the bounds of which you may be? ⁴⁵

In their brevity and in their breadth these questions show the emergence of the workings of the new American spirit within the framework of its Scottish antecedents.

The presbytery is to have absolute control in the matter of congregational calls. A minister of the church's presbytery is to officiate in the congregational meeting for that purpose, and "The call, thus prepared shall be presented to the Presbytery, under whose care the person called shall be; that, if the Presbytery think it expedient to present the call to him, it may be accordingly presented: And no Minister or candidate shall receive a call, but through the hands of the Presbytery." ⁴⁶ This is emphasized again: "No Bishop shall be translated from one church to another, nor shall he receive any call for that purpose, but by the permission of the Presbytery." ⁴⁷ And, as had been the common practice of the church, it is necessary for a congregation to have the approval of its own presbytery before it can call a man from another presbytery. ⁴⁸ So also, the presbytery can remove, or refuse to remove, a pastor from his charge. ⁴⁹

Presbyteries are to consist of "all the Ministers, and one ruling elder from each congregation, within a certain district." ⁵⁰ The original draft had made the

⁴⁵ Ibid., p. 152. The questions for ordination were simply an elaboration of these. Cf. pp. 158-159.

⁴⁶ Ibid., p. 157. Cf. [Steuart], op. cit., p. 6. "It is to be remembered, that no probationer or minister, is to receive any call to a vacant congregation, but from the hands of the presbytery to which they belong; for, it is by their [the presbytery's] determination that the calling and entry of a minister is to be ordered and concluded."

⁴⁷ 1788 Form, p. 161.

⁴⁸ Ibid., p. 162.

⁴⁹ Ibid., p. 165.

⁵⁰ Ibid., p. 143.

provision that vacant churches had the right to be represented by a voting elder,⁵¹ but there was a good deal of discussion in the 1787 Synod as to whether or not the point should stand.⁵² In the end it remains, and the church follows the impulse of the original Presbytery⁵³ and the practice of the Church of Scotland.⁵⁴

No element of voluntary association can be detected in the provisions for the presbytery's authority. When it is duly constituted with a quorum, the presbytery is to be "a judicatory, competent to the dispatch of business; notwithstanding the absence of the other members".⁵⁵

c. Synods and the General Assembly

The American Form gave this definition of a Synod: "As a Presbytery is the convention of the Bishops and Elders, within a certain district; so a Synod is the convention of several Presbyteries, within a larger district." The Synod had the power to judge appeals which were presented in an orderly fashion by the presbyteries and to give judgement in references involving ecclesiastical matters, which were made to them. They were to review the record-books of their respective presbyteries and to "redress whatever hath beendone by Presbyteries contrary to order". The synods were not to be advisory bodies only, for they were to "make such regulations, for the benefit of their whole body, and of the Presbyteries and Churches under their care, as shall be agreeable to the word of God, and not contrary to the decisions of the General Assembly, and to propose, to the General Assembly, for their adoption, such measures as may be of common advantage to the whole Church".⁵⁶

⁵¹ 1786 Draught, p. 12.

⁵² Cf. Records, p. 539.

⁵³ Cf. Supra, p. 50.

⁵⁴ Cf. [Steuart], op. cit., pp. 44, 75.

⁵⁵ 1788 Form, p. 144.

⁵⁶ Ibid., p. 146.

The General Assembly was to be "the highest judicatory of the Presbyterian Church; and shall represent in one body, all the particular Churches of this denomination; and shall bear the style and title of THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF THE PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH IN THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA".⁵⁷ This Assembly was to be a delegated body, with commissioners appointed by the presbyteries in proportion to their respective numbers of ministers.

The original draft of 1786 had stated that the General Assembly "may not assume the business of a presbytery",⁵⁸ but this was omitted the following year and was not included in the final Form. Instead, the 1787 Draught⁵⁹ introduced a check on the Assembly's power which was incorporated into the church's constitution. It said: "Before any overtures or regulations, proposed by the assembly to be established as standing rules, shall be obligatory on the churches, it shall be necessary to transmit them to all the Presbyteries, and to receive the returns of, at least, a majority of the Presbyteries, in writing, approving thereof."⁶⁰ This was nothing more than an American version of the Scottish "Barrier Act", which in 1697 had stated that any acts which were to be "binding Rules and Constitutions to the Church" must not be enacted by the General Assembly without the approval of a majority of its presbyteries.⁶¹ The new Form of Government itself was adopted solely by action of the Synod of New York and Philadelphia, since there was as yet no constitutionally prescribed method for legislating the establishment of the church's Constitution.

⁵⁷ Ibid., pp. 146-147.

⁵⁸ 1786 Draught, p. 18.

⁵⁹ 1787 Draught, p. 16.

⁶⁰ 1788 Form, p. 148.

⁶¹ Cf. "The Barrier Act", printed in Cox, op. cit., Appendix I, p. 361. Cf. Burleigh, J.H.S., A Church History of Scotland, London, 1960, p. 266.

But this marked the end of the highest court's acting as a 'presbytery of the whole'.⁶² The new General Assembly was to be the final court of judgment "in controversies respecting doctrine and discipline". It would communicate with churches overseas and would put a stop to disruptions and schisms within its own body.⁶³ The authority of synods and General Assembly was, for the time being, described in broad and general terms.

It is clear that American Presbyterianism did not intend that synods and the General Assembly should exercise direct controls over ministers and congregations which had been specified as areas of presbyterial supervision. But both were authoritative judicatories. The American polity carefully attempted to divide responsibility and to balance church power within its courts. Reception, trials, ordination, control of churches, and so forth, resided with the presbyteries. Matters of broader concern, affecting the whole body, fell to the 'higher' courts, which, also authoritatively, would receive and decide appeals from the decisions of the presbyteries. There was a logical and systematic line of authority traced through the church's judicatories, which, at this point, diverged from and was superior to the Westminster plan.⁶⁴

⁶² As for future changes in the church's Constitution, itself, the Synod ruled "that the Form of Government and Discipline and the Confession of Faith, as now ratified, is to continue to be our constitution and the confession of our faith and practice unalterable, unless two thirds of the Presbyteries under the care of the General Assembly shall propose alterations or amendments, and such alterations or amendments shall be agreed to and enacted by the General Assembly". Records, p. 546.

⁶³ 1788 Form, p. 148.

⁶⁴ Westminster had said: "The Provincial and National Assemblies [i.e. synods and general Assembly] are to have the same Power in all Points of Government....within their several Bounds respectively, as is before expressed to belong to Classical Presbyteries within their several Associations." Westminster Directory, p. 491.

D. Conclusions

Faced with the practical problems of increased size,⁶⁵ American Presbyterianism devoted a great deal of time, effort, and expense to the formulating of its official polity. In so doing it produced a system flexible enough to meet both its own immediate needs and any future expansions and adjustments demanded of the church. The genius of this Order was the placing of authority for the most immediate concerns of the denomination's ministers and congregations in the hands of workable area presbyteries.

This authority was complete. Any pressures for a Congregationalist-orientated form were quickly removed; the 'higher' courts were to have firm control over both ministers and congregations. The church followed the Westminster form, along with its Scottish applications, very closely, but not rigidly. Adaptations were made for the American situation (just as the Church of Scotland had made certain adaptations for the Scottish situation), but the basic principles of British Presbyterianism were adhered-to without variation. The American Form of Government was a revision of the Westminster Form and Directory. The framers of the American polity worked with these Westminster symbols before them and also were guided by the subsequent experience of the Scottish Church.

The presbytery emerged as the radical court for American Presbyterian life, as, indeed, it was in practice for British Presbyterianism; but the significant difference was that to the American presbyteries were specifically assigned the most basic matters of ministerial and congregational supervision in the life and order of the Church. Yet there was to be no 'Congregationalism of presbyteries'; these area courts did not stand as isolated units in the new American nation, but were

⁶⁵ At its first meeting, in 1789, the General Assembly listed 177 ministers (155 of whom were the settled pastors of 214 congregations), eleven licentiates, and a total of 420 churches. Minutes of the General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church in the United States of America, 1789-1832 (printed), pp. 14-21.

authoritatively and constitutionally bound with and responsible to the whole church, through synods and the General Assembly.

The climax of the long process of revision and formation came in 1788:

The Synod having fully considered the draught of the form of government and discipline....hereby do ratify and adopt the same, as now altered and amended, as the Constitution of the Presbyterian Church in America, and order the same to be considered and strictly observed as the rule of their proceedings, by all the inferior judicatories belonging to the body. ⁶⁶

⁶⁶ Records, p. 546.

C O N C L U S I O N

The Presbyterian Church in colonial America was unique. Of all denominations it alone had shaped and exercised an authoritative church organization which was not controlled by European churches, and because of this it had been a strong and relevant force in the forming of the new nation. Yet there had been a pattern of organization, commonly held by its members and judicatories, upon which the church had operated.

Initially founded by a vigorous and creative Ulster Scot, the church breathed the New World spirit into a structural body primarily based upon the polity of the Church of Scotland, with its Westminster foundations and Ulster applications. At least one recent writer has failed to distinguish the spirit from the form and has imagined that because colonial church leaders departed from older Presbyterian polemics they also departed from authoritative forms of Presbyterian polity. An examination of the minutes of the judicatories of the church during the period 1706-1788 shows the situation to have been quite different, for presbyteries exercised extensive control over both their ministers and their congregations. Any prevailing Congregationalist sympathies in the Presbyterian Church were challenged from the outset in the original Presbytery, subdued in the conflict with the Log College men, and finally defeated when a detailed Constitution was adopted and a full system of courts established.

Benefiting from the experience of the application of classical Presbyterian forms to the American condition, the church finally produced a definitive standard. The indefiniteness of this procedure contained a number of pitfalls during the eighteenth-century. It meant that synods were forced to exercise more extensive control in order to give cohesiveness to the whole body and to keep dissident presbyteries and individuals from acting on their own, rather than upon the entire church's, authority; and this produced an amount of uncertainty as to the division between synodical and presbyterial control. But quite advantageous to the church was the energetic and creative use of presbyterial authority. These courts exercised the determinative

influence of the church for colonial Presbyterians. Congregations and ministers looked to these judicatories for supervision and direction in the concerns of the ongoing life and government of the church.

Following the healing of the internal feud which brought on the Old and New Side split, the church showed great maturation. Something of the same native spirit which, uncontrolled, had led the revivalists to their defiance of ecclesiastical order, now was channeled into stable forms of church life. But even during periods of unrest and division, whenever the church was called upon to act in its authoritative corporate capacity, it always returned to the commonly held pattern. In the numerous references to its own understanding of its polity, the church, through presbyteries and synods, constantly established the fact that it both premised classical Presbyterian forms and promised to abide by them as far as native conditions would allow. The new 'wine' of the American spirit continually was poured into well-seasoned old wine-skins.

In the creation of its own written Constitution, American Presbyterianism summarized its past and determined its future. The church had begun with a single area judicatory, which throughout the entire formative colonial period had divided and subdivided itself, making these readjustments in order to insure that the most effective control of congregations and ministers would be exercised; and, though there were the occasional conflicts with synodical authority, the normal life of the church was centered in its presbyteries. The American church's contribution to Presbyterian order was that, with no interference from a civil authority, it was able to produce a self-contained polity, a system employing checks and balances, where presbyteries would take initial jurisdiction and yet be authoritatively bound to the whole Church through synods and General Assembly.

As it faced the demands of witnessing to the life of the new nation, American Presbyterianism had much history upon which to stand, much history to overcome, and much history to make. From its British heritage and from its own experience of eight decades, the church had shaped a polity designed both for its immediate needs and its future possibilities.

APPENDIX I.

The organizations of the Dutch Reformed and Anglican Churches
in Colonial America

It is instructive to examine the early polities of two other colonial churches to see the distinct advantage held by the Presbyterians at the formation of the original Presbytery. Apart from Congregationalism, the only other denominations prior to the formation of the Presbytery which had any recognizable form of polity were the Dutch Reformed and the Anglican churches. They shared one thing in common; until after the Revolutionary War both were, to varying degrees, under the ecclesiastical control of their 'mother churches' in Europe.

A. The Dutch Reformed Church

Seven years after the Synod of Dort, the Reformed Church of Holland was brought to Manhattan Island,¹ but it was two years before an actual organization was accomplished. In April of 1628 Jonas Jansen Michaelius² arrived at New Amsterdam.³ He came by the appointment of the Classis of Enkhuizen and was the first, and last, minister to be sent by any classis (presbytery) other than the Classis of Amsterdam, which thereafter took charge of the affairs of the colonial church.⁴ Within a month, Michaelius had organized a congregation of fifty members, this authority having been granted to him by the Dutch classis.

But apart from the authority to form a church, the New World Dutch ministers found themselves quite limited, for most of their actions required approval from the Nether-

¹ The congregation formed continues in New York City as the Marble Collegiate Church, the oldest continuing church in the United States. Drury, Clifford, Four Hundred Years of World Presbyterian History, Berkeley, California, n.d., p. 870.

² For a concise account of the early Dutch ministers in America, Cf. Corwin, Charles E., "The First Ministers in the Middle Colonies," JPH, XII, pp. 346-384.

³ Farrar, James M., "The One Hundredth General Synod of the Reformed Church," JPH, III, p. 309.

⁴ Corwin, Charles E., "The First Dutch Minister in America," JPH, XII, p. 146.

lands. An extensive correspondence was carried on with the Classis of Amsterdam, but the matter of delay was a serious problem, and very soon there was agitation to be freed from the restrictive control of the home classis and to form an autonomous American judicatory. Domine Polhemus wrote to Amsterdam in 1662: "We stand in need of a communication with one another in the form of a Classis, after the manner of the Fatherland. It is desirable that this be begun....".⁵

The Classis of Amsterdam was not even of a mind to consider such a request, and decade after decade the matter became more crucial. The colonial ministers believed, quite rightly, that the expansion of the Dutch Church in America was greatly impeded by its not having an indigenous presbytery. The Classis of Amsterdam believed, perhaps rightly, that a colonial classis would run the great risk of slackened doctrinal orthodoxy and Church order. Months were consumed in corresponding with the Netherlands, and to a large extent the American domines found their ecclesiastical hands tied. In such a situation it was inevitable that irregularities would arise.

The inability to ordain was the most vexing problem to the Dutch ministers in America, as is seen in the case of Paul Van Vleck (Paulus Van Vleecq). Van Vleck was a "reader" (similar to the Anglican office) in the Dutch congregation at Kinderhook, New York. In 1709 a Colonel Nicholson asked the New York Legislature for a reader or a minister who spoke Dutch to go on a British expedition to Canada, and the legislature "Ordered that Mr. Duboys, Mr. Freeman and Mr. Antonides, Dutch ministers, do before Tuesday next examine the said Van Vleck [who had offered himself for the expedition, on the condition that he be ordained] in the presence of two of her Majesty's Council and two of the members of this House acquainted with the Dutch language, and if the said Van Vleck be found orthodox, to ordain and qualify him for the Ministerial Function accordingly."⁶

⁵ Quoted in Farrar, *op. cit.*, p. 310.

⁶ Quoted in Hinke, William J. (ed.), "Church Records of Neshaminy and Bensalem, Bucks County, 1710-1738," JPH, I, p. 115.

Dubois and Antonides informed the legislature that they did not have the power to ordain anyone to the ministry, "by the direction of the Classis of Amsterdam" and asked that they might not be called upon to do "anything inconsistent with the constitution of the church to which they belong".⁷ The following month the two wrote to the Classis, relating the situation and accusing Domine Freeman of being willing to proceed with the ordination.⁸ It seemed that Freeman did not succeed, because a letter to him from the Classis in July of 1710 criticized his conduct in the matter of Van Vleck, "whom, contrary to all church order, you tried to ordain".⁹ In March of 1714 the Classis again wrote to Freeman that "Revs. DuBois and Antonides were right, when they said that they could not examine and ordain him [Van Vleck] as pastor, and that the Classis would not have taken it well, if they had. Both they and you have done well in refusing to do this".¹⁰

Yet the curious thing is that Van Vleck had been ordained. On September 21, 1710 he requested the original Presbytery of American Presbyterianism, meeting at Philadelphia, to accept him as a member (Cf. Supra, p. 54). A committee of three ministers was appointed to look into the matter and reported back their findings. "After serious debating thereon, [it was] put...to the vote, admit him a member of the Presbytery or not, and it was carried in the affirmative."¹¹

The question is, Who ordained Van Vleck? The Presbytery would not have received him as a member if it did not have sufficient proof of his ordination; besides, they most certainly would have been familiar with the circumstances surrounding his attempts to be set apart to the ministerial office. We must conclude that he had been ordained by Domine Freeman, who did not state the whole truth to the Classis of Amsterdam. Yet this leaves

⁷ Ibid.

⁸ Cf. Ibid., pp. 115-117 for the letter.

⁹ Ibid., p. 117.

¹⁰ Ibid., pp. 117-118.

¹¹ Records, p. 17.

a further problem: it is difficult to imagine that the other Dutch ministers, especially DuBoys and Antonides, would not have known about the ordination, at least upon Van Vleck's being received as a member of the Presbytery. Why, four years after he had joined the Presbyterian Church, did the Classis of Amsterdam not know of it and the implied prior ordination?

Whatever the answer to the above problem, the situation shows how the subjection to a 'presbytery' thousands of miles away contributed to the provincialism of the Dutch Church in colonial America; the difficulties continued until well after the close of the War of Independence. And during this period, living close by their Presbyterian neighbors in the Middle Colonies, the Dutch began to look longingly. In February of 1756 Theodore Frelinghuysen wrote to the Classis of Amsterdam:

Our brethren, the Presbyterians, have for a long time already been holding their Presbyteries and Synods.....Therefore, they are in a condition....to manage their own ecclesiastical affairs.....

Our Reformed Church, numerous as it is in membership, is in a desolate condition. It has neither Classis nor Synod.....

The time is now come, Rev. Fathers, for our eyes to be opened somewhat. ¹²

B. The Anglican Church

The organization of the Church of England in America during the colonial period was, perhaps, the most confused of any denomination's. The question of the establishment of the church, especially in South Carolina, Virginia, Maryland, and New York, caused endless controversies between Anglicans and "dissenters", principally because the dissenters nearly always were in the majority. Indeed, until the end of the seventeenth-century it was an open question as to whether or not the Church of England actually was 'established' in any meaningful sense. The East Hampton, Long Island, Book of Laws (prepared by James, the Duke of York, in 1664) makes it clear that congregations were not required to elect Anglicans as their pastors. ¹³

¹² Hastings, Hugh (ed.), The Ecclesiastical Records of the State of New York, Albany, 1911, Vol. V, pp. 3648-3649. Cf. Gaustad, Edwin S., Historical Atlas of Religion in America, New York, 1962, p. 28a.

¹³ Printed in Collections of the New-York Historical Society, 1809, New York, 1811, Vol. I, p. 332.

Yet even when they attained legal establishment, the Anglicans were unable to establish a local bishopric.¹⁴ The dissenting Protestants feared all along, quite correctly, that under establishment an Episcopal Bishop would be able to wield civil as well as ecclesiastical authority, to the extent, at any rate, that it would be exceedingly difficult to practice other than the legal faith. The fact that they wanted the Church of England established in all the colonies, with a bishop exercising strong powers, was made threateningly clear by many Anglican leaders, especially Archbishop Secker and Thomas Chandler. While many Anglicans tried to assure the dissenters that the bishops they desired would only be "spiritual" bishops, exerting no political power and allowing full freedom in matters of religion, these words could not be heard by the dissenters; the actions of many Anglican Churchmen, who effectively opposed the chartering of dissenting churches and schools, spoke much louder. It can be wondered just how serious a proposal the "spiritual" bishops was, since, if such a plan had worked while the colonies were still under the control of Britain, there would have been an excellent case presented by English dissenters for a similar system in the mother country.

Faced with this situation, the care of the Anglican Church in the colonies rested with the Bishop of London. Such an arrangement was hardly suitable to the men in that office, and in the mid-eighteenth-century one Bishop of London said: "....the care [of the colonial church] is improperly lodged, for a Bishop to live at one end of the world, and his Church at the other, must make the office very uncomfortable to the Bishop, and in a great measure useless to the people".¹⁵

A plan was attempted for the utilization of "Commissioners" from the Bishop of London, who, themselves, would have no episcopal power, but it proved to be of little usefulness,

¹⁴ For a recent penetrating study of the subject, Cf. Bridenbaugh, Carl, Mitre and Sceptre, New York, 1962. Cf. also Trinterud, Leonard J., The Forming of an American Tradition, Philadelphia, 1949, pp. 228-241.

¹⁵ Perry, W.S., Historical Collections Relating to the American Colonial Church, Vol. I, Hartford, Connecticut, 1870, p. 373.

and under these circumstances a large part of what authority was exercised devolved upon colonial governors. This was true especially in Virginia, where appointment of ministers to local parishes often was executed by Governor Robert Dinwiddie. A typical example of such an appointment was Dinwiddie's recommendation of John Ramsay to St Anne's Parish in Albemarle County. His letter to the church is dated from Williamsburgh on 13 December 1751. The congregation was unlikely to reject such a 'suggestion':

Gentlemen: I have enquired into the Vacancies of Church livings...and being informed that your Parish is Vacant....I have the Pleasure and Satisfaction of recommend[ing] the Bearer, the Rev. Mr. John Ramsay.....not doubting but he will answer and give you full Satisfaction.....I therefore desire you will receive and Entertain him as your Pastor, which will be very agreeable to, Gent., Your most humble Servt. ¹⁶

An 'unofficial polity' was exercised by the missionaries sent out from England by the Society for the Propagation of the Gospel in Foreign Parts (SPG, organized in 1701), but episcopal authority was virtually non-existent until after the Revolution, when the threat of establishment was removed. The first Anglican work in the colonies had begun in 1606; the first resident bishop was not consecrated until 1783, when the colonies were colonies no longer.

The practical result of the Anglican predicament was that most of its colonial churches operated on a Congregationalist polity, for all intents. A letter written by Alexander Mackrabie of New York to Sir Philip Francis of England just a few years before the War of Independence is very understandable, and it shows again the Presbyterian advantage in polity:

The zealous members of the Church of England are full of Apprehensions at the great and growing power of the Presbyterians.....The Church People [i.e. Anglicans], conscious that the Presbyterians, who have the Appointment of their own Ministers, must always outnumber them, are desirous of having some Person here vested with the Power of Ordination--but they don't like a Bishop, nor Ecclesiastical Courts, in short they don't know what they want. ¹⁷

C. Conclusions

The formation of the original Presbytery was a vitally significant move, when judged

¹⁶ Virginia Historical Society, The Official Records of Robert Dinwiddie, Vol. I, Richmond, 1883, pp. 14-15.

¹⁷ Quoted in Trinterud, op. cit., p. 240.

in relation to other branches of the Church in the colonies. That Presbyterian organization could, at once, be both indigenous and authoritative presented the denomination with definite advantages over all other groups and paved the way for its strong and dominant position during the colonial period.

APPENDIX II.

A letter from James Anderson and
a representation to the Presbytery of Long Island

[In 1884 Charles A. Briggs was in Britain, doing research for his book, American Presbyterianism. At the Advocates' Library in Edinburgh (now the National Library of Scotland) he found six letters written from James Anderson, pastor of the Presbyterian congregation in New York City, to John Stirling, Principal of the University of Glasgow. Briggs printed five of these in the appendix to his work, explaining that the sixth was of a personal nature. In retracing some of Briggs' steps, the present author has discovered, in the same collection, a seventh letter from Anderson to Stirling, dated July 4, 1726, a year and a half after he wrote the glowing letter of introduction for Dr John Nicoll (Cf. Supra, pp. 96-97). Here, in the 1726 letter, Anderson poured out all his feelings and anxieties about the newly-arisen conflict and asked Stirling to route any further monies away from Nicoll. To give the Principal a full (from Anderson's viewpoint) account of the matter, he enclosed a lengthy copy of the case against Nicoll, as it had been presented to the Presbytery of Long Island. This took the form of a "Representation" to the presbytery, plus several letters which had been read to the court, letters which the complainants hoped would strengthen their case against Nicoll. All this, in Anderson's handwriting, was added to the mailing.

[The probable explanation for Briggs' not finding the letter and document is that they were not in their present volume when he undertook his research. All Anderson's letters are in Volume XXII of WL, but this seventh one and the Representation apparently have been inserted in the order of numbering. Following the item numbered 123, the Representation is numbered 123 B, and the letter has the curious numbering, 123 b B. The next item is numbered 124. The volume was rebound in 1934, and it appears that the numbering of 123 B and 123 b B was done by a hand other than that which did the original.

[These documents gain historical significance for us because the minutes of the Presbytery of Long Island are not extant. We not only see the kind of affair presented to an early American presbytery, but also have valuable letters connected with the case.]

A. A letter from James Anderson

R R & D. Sr

Last fall I writ you from this by Mr Duncan Campbell, concerning The publick, my self and children, which, I doubt not before this, is come to hand for Mr Campbell, who returned hither from London this spring told me he took care to send it, I should be glad you would honour me with an account of your sentiments and opinion thereon; I have also, this spring, received one from you, of a pritty old date, recommending to me Mr William Gray, he lived here near a twelve month [and] was a constant attendant on the publick ordinances, and, I doubt not, will be usefull in this country both as to his own interest and that of the publick with those he has an opportunity, in his way of businesse to be conversant among; he hath been absent from this place for about 8 or 9 months and is now returned to receive goods sent from his freinds in Glasgow to Mr Curre.

By the inclosed, if your occasions will allow you to peruse the same, you'll see the ground and occasion of a new unhapy disturbance and a very threatning like Division in our poor little church here, under the pressure of which my spirits are quite like to be sunk & depress'd. This Disturbance, you'll see, has been cheifly occasioned by Doctor Nicoll his Disposall of what mony he has gott over from great brittain in an arbitrary manner without and contrary to the consent advice and orders of our church, much to the scandal and reproach of religion wherof he has been so great and zealous a professor, much to the Disturbance of the Domestick peace of severals concerned in the congregation as well as that of the whole society. This Disturbance is like to come to such a height as to threaten the utter ruin of the society, and for my own shame the Largenesse of my family is such and requires such subsistance, that by the meer pressure of necessity, abstract from all other considerations, I shall be very shortly oblided to sue to our presbytery for liberty of removal from this place, the consequence of which to the socety I shall not take on me to determine but am affray'd of the worst, because, tho' the Doctor (by reason of my being oblided, in point of conscience etc with the representatives of the church, to Declare against his proceedings) be, not only cool'd as to his former zealous affection for me, but, I'm Doubtfull, a contrary fire of reb:[ellion] and resentment against me is kindled, by reason of which he is not only willing that I should remove, but uses all means he can to render my removal from this place more & more necessary. Yet, upon the other hand, a great part of the congregation Declare that if I do remove, the[y]'l never be more concerned therewith.

The Doctor is now, which perhaps you'll look on as a very strange & surprizing turn, for having a minister from Boston or by the influence of the Boston minrs, his aim therein seems to many to be mony more than Religion; sometime after his return from Scotland he and a near acquaintance of mine were conversing together in his chamber, calculating what mony we might in a modest conjecture and calculation expect from great Brittain, after computing all that might rationally be expected it was found that the church should be still in debt 400 or 500 [lbs.], upon which the Doctor said, I know a way by which we could in all humane probability be very soon relieved if it was right or Lawfull for us to try it. Sayes my acquaintance to him, what way is that? He Answer'd, when I was in London, I found, to my sad experience, that the ministers of Boston had such influence on the London ministers, especially the independants, that if I had had a recommendation from them, I should have raised as much mony as to pay our Debts[.] Now, sayes he (the Doctor) if we had a minister from and by the influence of the boston divines I am morally assured that we

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should, betwixt London and Boston, Soon get as much mony as to clear our debts. Well, sayes my acquaintance, pray Doctor why do not you try this method, for you may perhaps gett a young man, a minister from Boston, that may be many wayes fitter for this place then Mr. An[derson], whose family may be easier supported here, and if thereby you can also have the debts of the church pay'd, you'l, I think, sitt much in your own light, if you do not

attempt it. to which the Doctor replied a God forbid, and that a Boston minister would never do here, and never should in his time. Then the Doctor and I were yet very good freinds. But now this Difference falling out, wherein I am oblidge'd to show my Dislike to the Doctors managment, he has fallen into another way of thinking, and, if he had man- adged wisely, might have gain'd his point upon my removal, which I heartily and willingly would have complied with and still am, (if allow'd by the presbytery) upon prospect of the good and advancement of the congregation, for the good and advancement of which, I am, I think, willing to suffer, if it shall please God so to order it, either in my removal from or stay in the place. But the Doctor falling out with the most leading men, next to himself, in the congregation by refusing to comply with them in some of the matters so much spoken of in the representation, he has so exasperated them, as well as many more in the congregation, that, they say, they'll never be more concerned with the Doctor, and, in short, look upon him, as a man, notwithstanding of the show that he has made for religion, of little or no integrity or honesty, and as a man too much set for the advancement of his own private aims and interests.

This account of the Doctor may be look'd on as strange, coming from the pen of one who before now has given him so many and so great encomiums and commendations for piety and integrity. But tho I will not yet allow myself to think but that the Doctor is pious etc, yet I am confident that he is very much out of the way, and acts such a strange part in these matters, as is enough to make some cast off all profess'd piety.

These managements of the Doctor have been laid before our session, and by the session re- ferr'd to the presbytry, but he declines both these judicatures, the presbytry have therefor refer'd the businesse of the representation to the Synod. I tho't to have altogether for- born writing on these heads, and was indeed, of my self, averse to it, both because the matter is refer'd to the Synod to set att philadelphia in September next, and also because I was affray'd writing might do hurt att home by hindering any mony collected or to be collected for us from being sent to us, but att last wasprevaild upon by this consideration viz. you would hear of these matters however, and if I did not write an account several would be ready to blame me as being defective in my duty in not acquainting with matters truly as they are. Now, Sr, pray, if you can, let not these things be a mean of discourag- ment to any as to their contributing for our releif, or of hindering any mony collected for us, from being sent to us, all that I desire in the affair, is, that matters may be so order'd both att London & Edinburgh, if possible, that the mony collected for the use of our church may not come into the Doctors hands, att least till you have the advice of our session presbytery or synod in order thereto, for the Doctors managment in the matter of the raising and advancement of his interest on his mony laid out, for Gods sake, on the church is such, that unlesse matters be rectifyed, all the mony we can expect over will be all little enough towards the payment of his interest, and we shall still be in debt notwith- standing. I must now add no more (only, earnest desires of your prayers for us,) but that I am with great esteem

Your most affectionate & obliged servt

p.s. when you write hither the
surest way of convyance is via
London to be left at the New York
coffie house there.

Ja: Anderson

New York, july 4, 1726

[Start third page]

p.s. Sr I hope you'll excuse my putting you to so much charge as the postage of this will come to, I could not gett it in lesse bounds, & if I sent you any account of our matters att all, I tho't it would be defective if I sent you not the whole as it lyes in the presbytery & refer'd to the synod, what is done about it in ye synod you'll hear I hope after wards; It is supposed here that The Church of Scotland will not easily quitt her concern & indeavours for the preservation & standing of this society as a branch of her self. Ja:A.

B. "A Representation of the case betwix the presbyterian church of New York & Dr Nicoll, as represented to The Revd Presbytry hold att Jamaica on Long Island May 18th 1726 by ye Representatives of sd Church"

We ye representatives of the presbyterian church in the city of New York, having, as we trust, just ground of offence given by Dr Jn Nicoll who is also a representative of sd congregation have tho't it our duty to table ye same before ye judicature of ye Church, & so, having been laid before our session, it comes by reference before this Rd judicature; And for as much as ye matter of our grievance is sufficiently sett forth in a letter from ye minr & representatives to ye Dr, we shall here omitt saying any thing thereon, only refer to sd letter afterwards inserted in this & proceed to inform of ye several steps we have from time to time taken in order to procure satisfaction, wherein we be kept as close as possible to ye rules laid down in Scripture, & it being a matter of ye highest concern & consequence, no less than ye welfare or ruin of our church depending, we be spared no pains nor arguments in order to bring him to compliance.

Rd gentlemen, you are not unsensible of ye Burden of Debt occasion'd by ye building of our church, yt for a long time hath lain on us, neither need we inform you of ye means by us us'd in order to get our Debts payd, you having been perfectly acquainted therewith, especialy in petitioning ye Church of Scotland, wherein we were favoured with your kind assistance—[page torn]—you yt as our addresses mett with ye compassionate regard of that church which we—[page torn]—ye deepest sense of gratitude, and it goin to our heart yt —[page torn]—now ye sorrowful occasion of entering these our melancholy [charges] against Doctor Nicoll who hath been our chief agent in these affairs, of whose fidelity in time past we have not the least doubt, which caus'd us to repose much confidence in him, But sad experience hath since given us reason to have great greif, to call ye same much in question, as by ye sequel may appear.

As ye fruit of our joynt & earnest endeavours several considerable sums of mony have been transmitted to us from Gt Brittain wch coming into ye hands of ye Dr, He inform'd us from time to time yt he had taken up therwith, such & such bonds wherein we

were jointly ingag'd, we were so far well pleas'd, hoping yt by ye kind providence of God we should in time be releiv'd of all our engadgm'ts, but about 8 or 9 months after ye Doctors arrival we had a meeting att his house, about ye election of Elders, when accidentally hapening to discourse about ye sd bonds, ye question was asked, whether those bonds were canceled or not? but were surpriz'd when we understood they were not, & yt ye Dr refused to cancel them, saying he kept ym for his own security, on which we grew verie uneasie to think yt we should remain bound after ye debts were payd & bonds taken up with ye churches mony, & from yt time took occasion to repeat our desire to him about ye cancelling ye bonds, but all to no purpose, he continuing to refuse ye same. Att length we requested a bare sight of them, which he also refus'd, under these circumstances our uneasiness increas'd, concluding he had got an assignment on ym, and which we are since well assur'd he hath.

We now tho't it high time to desire a sight of his accounts & for that purpose three of us went to his house, but, ye Dr not being at home, his wife, when she understood our business, told the account was not yet fairly drawn out, and fell into a great passion—abusing some, if not all, of us with hard scurrilous & diminutive names, thus expressing her resentment att our coming in a body upon such an errand to her house, on which they [i.e. we] went away, and we concluded to meet some dayes after att ye house of Mr McLenan and send for ye Dr, accordingly we mett & sent for him, but he declin'd coming, & hath ever since been backward to discourse of these matters, & tho' several of us separately repeated our desires to him, yet he continued to refuse to give us ye least satisfaction, upon which some of us Desir'd ye interposition of ye Revd Mr Robt Crosse hoping matters thereby might have been accomodated, but tho' after conference with parties he used his Christian endeavours, and after deliberation on matters, as we have been inform'd, wrote to ye Dr, yet we doubt with no suitable success of which he himself can best inform. See a copy of his letter page 5

Having brought matters thus far, we let it rest a while, hoping time would disperse these dark clouds: But in March last having occasion to meet about settling accounts

with ye minr, & also to consult about a projection of building a minrs dwelling house, for ye good of ye congregation, on the churches ground, The Drs presence & assistance att this meeting being very necessary, we prevaild with him to let us have his company; having then such a fair opportunity & special occasion, we jointly renewed our desire to him about ye bonds, and also again askd him, if he knew where yt 2000 lb bond was by which our house & ground was secur'd for ye intended use, this question had been askd him severall times before, without any direct answer given therto, but now he plainly told us he had not seen it since ye death of Mr McNish, notwithstanding of this reasons were given by some of our number, to ye Doctor, why we did suspect yt he might still have or know something of this bond, which reasons are as follow, viz. We have been credibly inform'd yt after ye death of Mr McNish he took, from among ye writings of Mr McNish, severall papers, which as ye Dr then said, related to our church, & we have reason to believe the 2000 lb bond was one, because that bond was lodg'd in Mr McNish's hands, and hath not been since hear'd of, tho' a diligent search & inquiry hath been made about it, neither know we of any other paper of consequence lodg'd in the hands of Mr McNish relating to our church, upon which ye Dr starts up in a great passion and went off from our meeting seemingly in a great anger & rage, which gave occasion to our Rd pastor to disclose his mind to ye Dr relating those matters in a very christian and freindly letter, a copy of which see page 7. Soon after this ye Dr sends ye remainder of his accounts with the hands & seale of 3 bonds amounting to 177 lb. in a letter wherein he told us, that was more than was yet payd with ye churches mony see a copy of this letter, pag[e] 6 having considered his accounts we took occasion in a letter of Answer to acquaint ye Doctor with our mind, which because it contain'd our judgmt as a body representative of ye whole church, it was tho't necessary & requested yt our minister should subscribe it along with us. a copy of the letter is as follows

Sr yours of the 11th of March we have receivd wherein you signifid to us, yt you have canceld more bonds than hath been payd with the churches mony if it was really so we should have but little word to say on yt head, but it appears to us by your own accounts, yt you have receivd from brittain of the churches,

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for understanding something more about this 2000 lb bond, know, yt ye Dr, ye minr, & ye other representatives along with Mr McNish gave their bonds conjunctly and severally for ye paymt of ye purchase mony of ye ground on which ye church or meetinghouse is built, for wch reason ye house & ground was made over in fee simple to Mr Anderson, Dr Nicoll and ye other representatives without making mention of ye use design'd, they vizt. minr & representatives for ye security therof to its intended use, made a bond to 3 minrs as trustees, Binding themselves & their heirs under ye penaltie of 2000 lb conjunctly & severally yt this house & ground should never be alienated, & yt they should (after their being payd and releiv'd of and from what they were bound for and had expended on ground, building etc.) make over the house etc. to any persons or incorporation those 3 trustees should nominate for the use of the congregation; Now this 2000 lb bond was lodg'd in the hands of ye Revd Mr McNish one of the three trustees, now deceas'd; Dr Nicoll & Clark Smith (Mr McNishes broyr in law) were only concerned as executors & intrumettors with Mr Mc Nishes estate & papers after his decease, none else can hold any private [or] Secular interest to serve by the having or destruction of this bond but only ye doctor, because he having from ye rest (for ye security of what ye church ow'd him over & above what he was bound for along with ye rest, a deed of Mortgage upon ye house & ground. If yt bond is in being, his mortgage (as he reckons) may be of little service or value, because he himself is bound by this 2000 lb bond not to alienate it, but if yt bond be destroy'd or gone, this makes ye Drs mortgage as firm a mortgage as any other

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churches cash (besides your expenses) above 640 lb and that ye whole of ye bonds taken up, interest included amounteth to less than 653 lb so that ye ballance due to you thereon can be no more than 12 lb odd shillings, therefor In the first place we judge it reasonable & desire that ye whole of ye bonds be cancell'd except ye sd 12 lb, ye reason of this will appear plain if you consider that our church & ground belonging to it stand mortgag'd to you by a firm deed, for your security as to most other debts of ye church beside what is containd in and relates to sd bonds and yt of Mr Byards (69lb 10 sh) which you speak of in your letter to us; And also if you consider yt this is a publick affair & therfor ought to be managd as ye majority of those concernd shall determine, & this we believe to be ye true intent of our benefactors so yt no man justifie arbitrary proceedings in such a case, how can we then rest satisfy'd with ye cancelling only of 177 lb of ye bonds, We may further add that you were ingadg'd in these bonds before any of us were concerned in them *

[Lined-off insert:]

* for understanding this, note, yt ye Dr, Mrs [i.e. Messrs] McKnight, Livingston, & Smith were the first purchasers of the ground, for ye payt of which these bonds were first by ym made, but afterwards when Messr Livingston & Smith broke off from the Society, the Dr & Mr McKnight ingadg to release them of these bonds then ye Mr McKnight—

with Mr Anderson Mr McNish and ye other 3 representatives, vizt. Messers Blake, Lyddle & Inglis became altogether bound to Coll[?] Depoiser [?] & Mr Byard for ye purchase mony of ye churches ground

& yet it was by your repeated persuasions yt we att length consented to discharge Messers Livingston & Smith & take ye burden on our selves much against our inclinations but yourself was afterwards no further ingaged than before, which we take to be no small argument why ye ought to comply with our above desires, & as we were altogether when bound in these bonds, we do not take it as very candid & broyrly dealing yt you did not desire some of us to bear your company when they were payd off, this gives us reason to think yt you have taken an assignment on them or something equivalent thereto, especially since—[page torn] —[we have not had as?] much as a sight of ym, is not this a plain imposition on our easinesse & ye firm confidence we have from time to time plac'd in you. therefore we beg yt you would not darken & totally ecclips yt esteem justly due to you for your zeal & diligence in this undertaking by your obstinate refusal to comply with a thing so just and reasonable. In the next place we desire yt you'l please to give us a positive ansr whether ye 2000 lb bond is not in your possession, or hath not been in your possession since ye death of Mr McNish, and whether you are willing to enter into a bond of ye like nature in case yt should be lost. Again we desire a surrender [of the?] chest or box together with ye publick papers, particularly ye church book, ye power of attorney made by ye congregation enabling us to act for ye sign'd by most of the members of ye congregation, & if there be any other publick papers, we apprehend they ought to be lodged in hands of those equally concern'd with your self, yt so we may have recourse to them when occasion shall offer.

Now sr a meeting of our session being appointed on ye 6th of April att ye minrs house, we have tho't convenient to acquaint you with the above particulars, yt so you may be provided against or before yt time, with what Ansr you shall think proper to give thereto, if time & place do not fitte with your convenience we are willing to attend your motion, provided it be not too slow, and you do let us know it before sd time; But in case you judge our cause & session not worthy of your notice, we shall find our selves oblided to refer ye whole matter to ye next presbytery, & we are ye rather inclin'd thereunto by reason yt

most of ye members of the session are parties concerned & so may be supposed to judge too favourably in our own case; as we look on our cause to be good we need not be asham'd to have it made publick, but had much rather conclude matters quietly among our selves, we propose the above method to prevent rougher means, whereby we doubt not but we could have releif, especially as to ye first particular mentiond.

As to your accounts, att present not insisting on many things exceptionable in ym, as severall journies undertaken wtout order of ye church etc., We can't but by ye way take notice of your rigid charge of interest & interest upon interest throughout your whole account from ye beginning of your expenses, by which our poor church is att this day almost, if not quite, as far in debted as it was att ye time of ye mortgage, after ye receipt of so many hundred pounds given for our releif, and we do not know but upon a strick inquiry the *greater half of your account will appear to be interest.

[Lined-off insert:]

*The greater half of your account, or the greater half of what by his account is due to him besides what relates those bonds which ye representatives of ye church want to be canceld which he has listed in with ye churches mony & in his last account of April 13 1726 he reckons as pay'd with [your mony?].

You may remember yt in your memorials printed in gt Brittain you declar'd to all ye world yt you were content your own private concerns should suffer rather than yt ye work of God in this place should be ruin'd, but do not your proceedings now speak ye quite contrary & say that rather than suffer in my own private concerns the work shall be ruin'd even by my own hand, it was an ancient observation, & we wish it may not be verified in the present case yt ye love of mony is the root of all evil which while some have [coveted?] others have ered from ye faith & [?] ymselves etc it is very discouraging to us to consider yt our debts are growing so fast, yt altho our church may att present be worth more than is owing, yet in a few years there will be more owing than ye church is worth, & so ye whole work will consequently drop, notwithstanding what hath or can be done to [avert?] it—to what purpose then will a patent of incorporation be, which hath coast us so much charge & pains, if we have no house left us?

Therefore on ye whole we much question whether interest can be lawfully taken from our poor church by its own members, since it manifestly tends to its utter ruin & will intirly disappoint our well wishers who have so largely contributed towards it, we intreat therefor yt your [zeal?] may appear in deed & in truth as well as in word, may it not be expected yt such a man as you who has in times passd used so many arguments to excite others to extend their Charity, who has been so active & unwearied to promote this work (as we yet hope out of earnest zeal for ye glory of God & good of souls) we say may it not be expected yt such a man would be content to have all his disbursmts compleatly & fully payd over to a peny without so stiffly insisting on interest? which, if unlawful in any case, as many divines have much questioned,¹ is certainly unlawfull in ye case before us, if this work should thereby be brought to nought, would it not be a just reflection on ye managers yt have consum'd such vast sums to no purpose? would not all our sincerity be esteemed as meer pretence ? & would not religion in generall be greatly hurt thereby? For it ye like objects of charity should present themselves with their petitions to those who have already given so much in vain, may they not meet with a flat refusal on our account? for if we, who, not only by private persons, but even by the General Assembly of ye Church of Scotland were accounted worthy of their asistance, & obtaind ye same, yet made so little improvmt of it, what may others expect yt shall come after us? would not vain glozy & self interest appear to have been the main motives in this undertaking, & so att length terminate in disgrace and infamy? If ye prospect of our ruin is not removd by your compliance in this matter, would it not be much better to dispose of our church immediatly, yt so we might have something left to carry on ye work, tho in a meaner appearance, rather than stay till we are forced by our growing debts intirly to drop, & despair of the recovering it? We after all desire yt you

¹ This is an interesting reference to the practice of 'usury'. We would not expect to find, within the Calvinistic tradition, such a late suggestion of its unlawfulness, although it may be suspected that the reason for its mention here was much more practical than ideological.

may either give us satisfaction as to ye above particulars before ye time of sd Session or be present therat to give in your reasons why this matter may not be sessionally & presbyterially determin'd as we crave for this matter being altogether a church concern we judge it our duty, so far as in us lyes, to prevent civil suits, & in case of your refusal to comply with our desires herein to table ye same in an orderly way before ye judicatures of ye Church, thus praying that ye unity of ye Spirit in the bond of peace may be indeavour'd to be kept by you & all of us, we subscribe our selves your sincere friends etc.

New York March 22
1725

Ja Anderson
John Blake
Thomas Ingles
Joseph Lydell

Within a few dayes after this ye Dr writes to us again telling us he shall not now stand to ans ye particulars, having done it in times past, but that he is not asham'd to have his actions relating to our church affairs examined & try'd by any proper judicature which he judges not our session synod or presbytery to be. Now if ye Dr has ansd ye particulars of our letter, we do not remember when nor wherin and so far was he from any peacable proposals ye immediatly on this he prepared for open war by ingadging one or two attournies in

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a true copy of sd letter

New York Aprl 4. 1726

Gentlemen Yours 22 ultimo is before me & tho' I shall not now trouble either you or myself to give a particular Answer thereto having sufficiently done it heretofore, and being of opinion yt optisima calumniarum remedium neglegentia est, yet in the generall I take leave to acquaint you yt as I have always acted faithfully & honestly in ye church affaires, so I'm neither ashamed nor affrayd to have my actions therein examined & tryd by any proper judicature, which I look not upon either your session presbytery or synod to be

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(the whole affair being altogether civil) but if you are determin'd to proceed according to your repeated menaces, you may, for neither law equity nor reason will oblige me to deliver up any security I have, till I am first payd or secur'd to my content, & when that is done, I shall be (as I always have been) ready to deliver or cancell them, as you see fitt gentlemen

Your Humble Servt John Nicoll

Superscrib'd

To The Revd Mr James Anderson etc.
to be communicated

in his behalf, but we find too many lawers fees in his former accounts without any good purpose to approve of his proceeding in this manner, looking on it as a manifest abuse off the good will of our benefactors to spend yt mony att Law which was given us to pay ye debts contracted by ye building.

Since this Letter, and ye Sessions reference of ye matter to ye presbytery, Mr Anderson, for him Self, and in the behalf of the church and us, made an offer to ye Dr by ye Rd Mr [Jonathan] Dickinson, to refer all matters in debate betwixt ye Dr & us to two minrs, one chosen by him & another by us, and that those two minrs, in case of non agreement, should have power to chuse any other person they pleas'd as an umpire in the matter, but Mr Dickinson could not bring ye Doctor to a compliance.

We know not what may move ye Dr to drive on att this rate, without any regard to the peace & welfare of this society, for sure we are, we were ready att all times to concurr with him in any proposals yt had but a seeming tendency to the good and interest of our church, & if we have been blame worthy in any thing, it is our too great compliance with some of his proposals, which then seem'd to us, and which we still beleive have been to our considerable dammage, particularly in having our mony remitted in bills of exchange rather than in goods, & we can't but think that ye church has lost by this means att least 30 per cent, but nothing would prevail with ye Doctor to be of our opinion, nothing but bill of exchange [would? ? withall?] & ye church hath realy been such a looser thereby, we leave it to any rationally man to conclude who hath been ye gainer when ye Dr hath had a great part of ye mony over in his own way, in drugs & other things for himself, These things consider'd, we think he hath but little reason to threaten us, as we are inform'd, he doth, that, if we continue to provock him, as he is pleas'd to call our present appeal to you, he'll put these bonds (on which he has taken an assignment as above) in suit against us.

The evil consequences of these things are, & are like to be truly many & great, it hath already been ye foundation of much domestick jarrs & contention, it hath brought our church & profession into contempt & ridicule among our enemies, it is matter of sore greif

& heart break to our sincere freinds, it is become ye common matter of table talk & tavern diversion & contention in ye place, it is a great Discouragmt to us to joyn with ye Dr in any other of his projects for procuring mony to pay ye remainder of ye churches debts which we should readily have done had he not acted so dissingenously by us, it tends much to the weakening of our hands by lessening peoples affections to us and our interest. The Dr hath declar'd yt he will withdraw his subscription towards ye support of our minr, which together with ye removal of some of our best subscribers from ye place, hath reduc'd our subscription mony to a very low ebb, so yt we are affray'd our minr shall not be able to hold it much longer amongst us, the subsistance of his family in this place requiring att least ye full sum promised in our call to him, which in present circumstances, we doubt we shall not be able to raise, & such is ye Doctors coolness towards Mr Anderson, since ye beginning of these differences, yt he hath proposd his removall, & ye getting of another minister (from New England), and so strongly is he now this way bent, yt he hath offerd to abate a considerable part of his interest mony, provided the congregation will agree thereto, we look on these things ye more unaccountable in him, considering with what disdain he rejected ye same proposals so lately made by others; & represented under his hand to a whole congresse of minrs and yt in a most forward manner along with some of us, yt if Mr An were removed, except it be by death, it would tend to ye ruin & utter overthrow of this infant congregation. This suddain & surprising change in the Dr seems very strange to us, Mr An being in all respects ye same in our opinion as he then was, & this seems to be but poor returns of thanks to almighty God for having so far prosper'd our indeavours.

As to the articles in his accounts which we think we have just reason to except against, even before & to this Rd judicature, The accounts themselves being altogether Ecclesiastick & relating to ye church, what judicature can be more proper to inspect into ye justice, equity, & righteousness, of a contra of ye accounts of a church & of a churches mony than a church judicature? it appears to us strange indeed if church judicatures may not inspect into & determine in matters & differences between ye members of ye church in matters relating to ye collections of ye church, & for ye poor, whether societies or persons, of ye church!

We say as to the exceptionable articles in ye Dr accounts, they are we apprehend too many to be here fully enumerated, however we shall say something of them in generall, and then make some few remarks on them in particular. In generall we think & say yt all such articles in his accounts yt have no relation to ye building, & for which he hath no order, or direction from ye church about, are not justly chargable in this account. As to the particular remarks, There are these following which we have observ'd.

First he charges as a debt 36 [lb] losse on a bill of exchange, of which, if any part att all of it ought to be chargd as a losse to ye church, yet it is presumable yt ye aggregation of ye sume arising by ye protest of sd bill of exchange & ye losse therof so aggregat'd by sd protest ought not to be chargd as a debt on ye church, morover what losse ye Dr has sustain'd by sd bill's being protested, & this 36 lb. of it its not being payd to him, yet there are reasons why no part of this losse ought by him to be chargd as a debt on the church, not only 1st because ye Dr had no orders from ye church with respect to this bill, & what he did in this he did of his own accord without advice etc., but 2dly because ye rest of ye bill as protested etc. was payd & yrfor little will be found of real losse in ye matter, att least chargable on ye church & 3dly bec[ause]: Mr Shaw who drew this bill, att whose coast, & against whom it was protested payd ye rest besides this 36 lb & in ye mean time satisfyd ye Doctors attorney (vizt his wife) as to this 36 lb itself, by giving his note for it, which she accepted as can be proved.

Secondly He charges, as a debt, the expense of two journies, one to Stamford anoyr to South Hampton, which journies were undertaken without order of church, morover all ye minrs yt were then commissioners att ye conference att Stanford could with better ground charge the expense of their severall journies, etc. upon our church than ye Dr can his.

Thirdly There are severall particulars chargd as payd by him to ye minr, which ought to have been payd by ye subscription mony, which ye Dr had ye lifting up of, and where yet so much is either due or in his hands, and ye minr in his accounts reckons all these particulars, payd by the Doctor to him, on ye score of, & as subscription mony, and for the Dr to charge these particulars as a debt to the church to be payd by any mony got as the

fruit of our petitions to gt Brittian, this is contrary to & inconsistant with an article in his printed memoriall in Brittain signifying yt we did not desire any thing yt way towards maintenance of our minister.

Fourthly in his account he places bonds, mortgage, interest of mortgage, & book accounts altogether & charges interest on ym all in cumulo & charges interest on the interest of ye mortgage twice if not thrice in the same account.

But as to this story of interest, & interest on interest (in it's own nature scandalous considering yt ye principall was laid & lent out merly (att least as pretence) for Gods sake, & God & his poor little church was ye only debtor) if it might be of any service, it were easie, as we think, to demonstrate & prove yt ye interest chargd from time to time in his accounts with ye church from ye beginning of his expense theron, has near, if not more than doubled ye sum of ye principal in 6 or 7 years time, & yt ye cheif part of ye whole debt now owing by or any way chargeable on the church (supposing & reckoning Coll Dep[oiser?] by Byards bonds payd and uplifted by ye churches mony) lyes in & consists of the Drs interest mony first & last, to give a specimen of such a demonstration, let the particulars following be considered

[Start fourth page]

1st The Drs first account with ye church. (ye particulars most but small in themselves & many of them payd in [businesse?] way) amounted to betwixt 200 & 300 lb, upon which he chargd interest for some time before he had from ye church a note for it bearing interest, which note principal & interest before ye date of ye note amounted to 300 lb.

2dly this note went on for sometime, till ye Dr, going a journey for Boston, craved & must needs have better security for his mony, if he had it not, he would be no more concern'd etc., upon which, to please him, all ye securty ye thing it self would bear, was offer'd, vizt. a mortgage, then ye 300 lb with its interest after ye date of ye note, together with some other small interveening accounts, amounted to 450 lb. then

3dly ye interest of yt 450 lb for 3 years (which was ye time specified in ye mortgage, which when expir'd the mortgage mony became payable) mounted ye sum in ye mortgage

to 558 lb odd shillings. then

4ly In his account July 26, 1725 he charges interest on ye whole sum in the mortgage (vizt this 558 lb odd sh:) from ye time wherein ye mortgage became payable viz from ye 5th of May 1724 to ye sd 26 of July, & calls it 15 months--wheras it wants 9 or 10 days therof, which 15 months as chargd amounts to 55 lb 17 sh. Here it might be notic'd, yt ye Dr in reckoning ye interest in his accounts, for raising & aggravating his sum is most carefull yt not ye least mite of due interest be lost, and so sometimes he is very punctual in mentioning the odd dayes: as interest to 3 months & 2 days: in his account March 10, 1725/6, but when he has a mind to change his interest for more days than is realy due (att ye date of his change) then he can lay his thumb upon 18 dayes viz from ye 10 of March to ye 28th ditto. & ten dayes viz from ye 26 of July to the 6th of August, as appears in his account July 26 forgetting to mention or expresse ye odd dayes. then

5thly in his account March 10 he charges on ye whole ballance wherein ye mortgage & its interest is included for 3 months & two dayes (which amounts to 16-15-11 $\frac{1}{4}$) and then immediatly after charges interest for 5 months (wherein the interest of ye preceeding 16-15-11 $\frac{1}{4}$ is reckoned) & this 5 months he reckons is 5 months compleat, wheras to ye 10th of March ye date of his account there was but 4 months & 10 dayes

Fift[h]ly [sic], there are some bonds taken up and payd according to his account July 26, 1725 which he has neither cancel'd nor given credite for or any account of to ye church in his account April. 13. 1726

Sixthly according to his accounts, he disposes of all ye publick churches mony, which ought not to be disposed but by advice & consent etc not only without but contrary to the expresse desire advice & judgment of ye church by ye minr representatives and deacons signifyd to him in ye letter of March.22., he in his account April 13 reckons ye churches mony got from gt Britt: towards payt of ye interest on the mortgage, while ye mortgage stands as yet, a sufficient security for both principal & interest, and ye bonds in which ye minr, Mr McNishes estate & ye representatives are equally bound with him without any security, & which he has realy lifted up & payd with ye churches mony, he has taken an

assignmt or receit on them as payd with his own mony & reckons them still as a debt on ye church.

Seventhly, He according to his own arbitrary disposall of the churches mony, in & by his accounts has payd himself, by ye churches mony, as to all or most of these unlawfull peices of usury & interest.

As to ye church book & other publick papers of ye church we are of opinion yt he wrongs us & ye church by his refusing to deliver up the same. Seeing it is ye custom of all other churches to keep such things in publick, we think we ought to enjoy ye same priviledge.

As to his refusing to serve ye church in ye station of an elder, without giving one reason why, even after he had consented to be chosen & was approven, the church standing in great need of such men, as we then judgd him to be, as to this we shall not now say any thing only remark, yt this gives us occasion to think yt however forward ye Dr hath been in times past to serve ye church, yet we find him now backward enough.

Reverend Srs. Altho we know very well, yt it is not in your power, nor within your sphere, as it is in ye power of the civil magistrate, to oblige ye Dr or any man to cancell bonds, yet his carriage & managmt, toward us & the church, in the above particulars, being as we humbly conceive, truly scandalous and so highly offensive, we beleive yt they are no way improper to be brought before you, as now they are, notwithstanding ye doctors objections & saying he'll laugh att that presbytery yt shall meddle in his affair, and we doubt not but you'll do your uttmost indeavour yt these offenses may be done away, for preventing further hurt & damage to ye church and religion thereby, and in case of obstinacy proceed to such censures, for ye good of ye church & the doctor, as in your wisdom you shal think fitt.

[End of fourth page,

except for a lined-off insert located in the bottom-half of the page:]

for understanding ye Drs accounts & his actings relative thereto, marginally note [yt] ye whole of ye debt due by ye church according to ye Drs accounts relates to one or other of these 3 particulars [dir?] first to ye bonds which ye Doctor has lifted up viz 655 lb or secondly to ye mortgage principall & interest, or 3dly to some other intermediate accounts which neither relate to the bonds nor mortgage, amounting to about 70 or 80 lb some of ye particulars of which it is tho't can never be justly allow'd him, as yt [a]ford 36 lb. etc. now as to ye last sort of charge which neither relates to ye mortgage nor to these bonds, ye ch: is willing ye Dr should be payd what is allowable

in it out of ye first of ye mony from gt Brittain, as to what relates to ye mortgage, ye Dr is already, by ye mortgage, securd, & hath by his acceptance therof deprived himself (by right) of a tittle to a preference of payt (of what ye mortgage secures) out of ye first of ye churches mony. As to ye bonds spoken of, he & all ye rest are equally bound in and by them, without any security, & yrfor ought with ye first be pay'd lifted up & cancell'd, and therefor ye church has ordered them to be payd first, The Dr has accordingly payd them, but keeps ym uncanceled, as if payd with his own mony for a double security of what is owing to him by ye church. Now as to this action of ye Drs Lesse might & would have been tho't & said of it, if all the persons bound in & by these bonds, had been equally willing with ye Dr to bind themselves in & by them, but it is othur-wayses, there were 3 of the persons vizt Mr Black, Mr Inglis, & Mr Lyddle, whom ye Doctor could not prevail upon by any fair or flattering rationall arguments to be willing to sign these bonds, therfor he with Mr McKnight gave a bond of indemnification to one of the three with design of drawing in ye rest, yt by his example they might be brought to sign, which accordingly took, att which, when ye minr knew of it, he was uneasie, and told them he could not that such a practice was Lawfull, to satisfie him, they, vizt the Dr & Mr McKnight, told him, they or theirs should never suffer by it, and what they had done to one, they would do the like to ye other two, if, & wherever, they should ask for it

[Start fifth page]

Because a copy of the following letters was read & given in to the presbytery with the Representation, as giving light to the whole matter, & showing what pains has been used with the doctor to bring him to a compliance in order to the prevention of breaches, I shall also adde them here; And In ye mean time observe to ye reader that the Doctor never took notice of either—Mr Crosse or Mr Andersons Letters, no more than if he had never received them, which (we are well assu^d) he did.

A Copy of Mr Crosses letter to Doctor Nicols.

Augst 17. 1725

Dr Nicoll

Sr.

That which was the subject of our conference when last together, hath been very much ye subject of my tho'ts ever since, I intended [to] have had some further discourse with you before I left New York, but had not an opportunity, neither did I see any of the persons concern'd in that affair (after I left your Self except Mr Anderson & Mr Lyddel, as for Mr An whatever your apprehensions may be of his conduct in this and tho' he be one bound with ye rest, yet this does not create in him ye least jealousie with respect to your managment, neither could I find by all the discourse we had together, yt he concerns himself any further in ye affair than as it relates ye peace & wellfare of the Society of which he is ye pastor, & ye good wherof he is bound in duty to consult, and he joynd with me in indeavouring to persuade Mr Lyddell to be easie & to use his interest with

ye rest for yt end, but I found after all we could offer, yt Mr Lyddell is not satisfied with your keeping ye bonds after ye mony is payd, he offer'd severall things which seem'd to carry reason with ym which I shall not now trouble you with, supposing that he has offer'd ye same to your Self, I shall therfor give you ye trouble of a few things as ye result of my own tho'ts, & shall use ye more freedom, not only be[cause] of ye unfeign'd regard I have for your self, but also because I am not sensible of any temptation I be under to be byassd, so yt if I offer any thing amisse, it must be an error in judgment, & shall willingly submitt to better information, And further did I not apprehend that the interest of Christ amongst you is in danger of suffering, I should not give you the least trouble this way.

Sr, after my most serious & unprejudic'd tho'ts, I can't find cause to approve your conduct in keeping up ye bonds after ye debt is pay'd by ye churches mony, ye reason to me appears plain & obvious, for this mony was given for to pay ye debt yt ye church was under, ye representatives of ye church especially these yt are bound are ye only proper persons to dispose of this mony to ye best advantage for yt end, it is plain, yt no particular member can regularly take upon him to dispose of it wtout ye consent of ye rest (which I do not understand to be your case) Its a thing yt no body will in ye least doubt of, but yt ye rest, if they had been consulted, (as in justice I think they should) would have converted ye mony to ye same use you have done, vizt to take up the bonds, and further, would have taken care to have ym cancell'd, & I cant see how you can vindicate your conduct in doing any thing in this affair but what would & should have been done had ye acted in consort with the rest, but I would have you make ye case your own, and then judge of it, supposing the bills had come to any of them (as they have an equal right with you in this affair) and they had done as you have, would you approve their conduct? if not, they have ye same reason to be disturbd as you would have had, Its true you have been an instrument in ye hand of God to do more for the promoting that interest than all ye rest of your brethren either did or could do, but that, (tho' it commands a just regard for you from all yt wish well to him, & you will do doubt have your reward) does not in my judgmt affect ye merits of this cause,

let me then sr expostulate with you, to be reconcild to your brethren, & to give them satisfaction in this matter, let not the dead fly gett into the pott of oyntment yt hitherto hath smell'd so sweet, I know they can have remedie & oblige you to deliver up all the bonds pay'd with the churches mony, but (alas) what would the consequence of this be? to me it appears dismall, ye very tho'ts of it are enough to create horror, How would the enemies of God blaspheme? how would your enemies triumph? and what dishonour it would reflect on your self, I leave you to judge, sed hac deus avertat.

What you cheifly insisted on in vindication of your conduct (as far as I remember) was the debts due to yourself for which you have no security but a mortgage upon the house and lot, which you seem to make little account of, because of the obligation you are under not to alienate it, & yrfor you look upon it, as a thing just & reasonable, that they as members of the same society, and consequently bound in duty to consult the good of it, should still stand bound, tho' their bonds be pay'd, yt in case

[Start sixth page]

ye mony fall short, and things come to an extremity, you may still secure your self att least so far as their obligations and ability can do it, and likewise preserve ye house for ye use for which it was intended, this I take to be the substance of what you offer'd, if mistaken shall willingly be reektyed, I could offer severall things upon those heads, but shall att present only breifly observe, yt there may be reasons why these persons should not be exposed to any such dangers, every thing being considered, and as for the mortgage, every body will look upon it as a sufficient security abstracting from the obligation you are under not to alienate it, and how far you are bound by this you know better than I.

But Dear Doctor why such apprehensions of danger? why so much consulting with flesh & blood now more than formerly when there was no such prospect of releif as divine providence now affords. you did not appear discourag'd, nay you have often expressed greater concern for these mens obligations than for all yt was due to your self, pray let your managment in this particular be agreeable to your profession, as it has hitherto been in other things, I would have you, in this matter, not so much to consider the persons you

have to do with, as ye interest of Christ which, to me, appears so much concern'd in this affair, there is nothing more fatal to a society than intestine divisions, yours has felt the sad effects of them, I wish your managmt in this may not be attended with this bitter fruit, the wise man tells us that the beginning of strife is as when one letteth out water, & therfor exhorts to wave off contention before it be meddled with Prob:17.14 the beginning of the first divisions appear'd but small in report of this, and yet you know how fatal it was like to prove, mony was ye occasion of that, which makes this appear ye more terrible to me, & causes me to think of yt divine truth 1 tim: 6.9,10. I'm affrayd ye old serpent curls unseen att ye bottom of all this, & is indeavouring again to thrust in his cloven foot amongst you, & ye prospect of your prosperity, & envies your self yt honour you have justly acquir'd by your uncommon zeal in promoting the interest of Christ in New York, and what makes me still more apprehensive of this, is, some expressions you dropt to me with respect to Mr An, as if you doubted of the debts being payd, or the congregations increasing while he continues with you, but why thus now Dr? not long agoe, you had no other prospect, but of ye ruin of that work, if he should remove, & now when providence seems to open an effectual door, for your releif & encouragmt, he who has been the instrument made use of God to gather a church amongst you, & defeat the designe of Satan & his instruments, must be lookd upon as an obstacle in the way of your prosperity, this appears to me very surprizing etc, but I'm affrayd I have tyrd your patience, & therfor shall not adde any thing further att present, but conclude with praying that the almighty God by his unerring Sp[iri]t may direct you to what is your duty in this & all other things, that the great Sheepherd may carry on the good work he has begun amongst you, & defeat all the designs & machinations of the grand adversary of our salvation, this with sincere & hearty regards to your wholeself & family, is from

Sr your assured friend & humble servant
Robert Crosse

[End of sixth page,
except for a lined-off insert at the bottom of the page:]

Tho' it be an improper place to insert the doctors first letter yet because there is room for it in ye end of this page, and because then the reader, by perusing this and

his other letter inserted in the margine att ye end of pag[e] 2d may see all that ye doctor has writt to the representatives & church in this whole affair, It shall be inserted, & it is as follows

To the Rd Mr James Anderson to be communicated to the representatives of ye church.

Gentlemen

New York March 11 1725

According to your desire [I] have sent you my account current, and also your hands & seals of more bonds than hath yet been payd with the churches mony, with the persons named to whom ye bonds were given, & the sum endorsed upon the back of them, gentlemen as I am pay'd by the church or upon the churches account I shall be ready to cancell the bonds, but not before, & I am moraly persuaded no reasonable person would desire me. [I] would have you take notice yt by the first of May next there is a bond to be payd to Mr Samuel Byard Esqr of 67 lb 10 sh, if you please you may take that up and cancell it or not att your pleasure, gentlemen

Your humble servt

John Nicoll

[Start seventh page]

a true copy of Mr Anderson's letter to Doctor Nicols

New York March.8. 1725

Dr. I dare not let my self think but that you are a Gentleman and Christian of real piety & probity, and yet there are some things, which I observe with respect to you of Late that Lay me under a necessity of apprehending you within ye power & prevalency of strong temptations, which drive you beyond due bounds, in your temper and carriage, when in the Least touched in that part wherein the sore lyes. Your kindnesse & regard for & to me have been so great and still continued, that I have been thereby almost under a temptation of being brid'd into silence from fear of offending you one of my best freinds and benefactors, but considering that this [is] not the part of a real Christian freind or honest pastor, that plain open dealing and rebuke is better than secret love, that the wounds of a freind are better than the kisses of an enemy, and least that, however offended you be with my plain dealing in the mean time, you should have cause of being justly offended hereafter on the account of my sinfull silence, I say, by these considerations, I have forc'd my self crosse the temptation to be very plain in the communication of my tho'ts to you, pray take it in good part as from your sincere cordial freind, and very much oblig'd servt, and as from one who desires to be faithfull to God, to his freind and to his own conscience.

Sr your carriage yesterday in turning so much out of Humor and going away in such huff before our conclusion by prayr has been to me [a] matter of no small uneasinesse since, partly because I did not see or hear any thing from any of the persons present that could rationally give ground for such a passion as you seem'd, to be in, and you [went] away

with [i.e. when] all that, as I remember, Mr Inglis said, att which you seem'd to be first moved, was that he did not know but that that 2000 lb bond, by which the church is secured for its present use, was in your own custodie, he told you he did not say that it was, but he did not know but that it might, and gave his reasons why drawn from your being concern'd with and in Mr McNishes estate and papers in whose hands the said bond was, Mr Black, afterwards, told, He would be more ingenuous and plain with, and tell you what he had heard as to this thing. Viz. yt you with Clark Smith one day looking into and among Mr McNishe's papers, you fell on a paper that you took and told Clark Smith thus, This paper does not belong to Mr McNishes estate, but has a relation to our church in New York, and so brought it with you, with Mr Black's telling you this you seem'd to be mightily commov'd, saying in a seeming heat Who did say so? tell me your author! etc He told you, he could do it. after this, being in appearance a little settled, you said, that inquiry should be made for that bond, to which I reply'd where shall we search? at whom shall we inquire further? Dr Nicol sayes he has it not, Clark Smith (with the asistance of Mr Crosse) has made a diligent search for it amongst all Mr McNishes papers and it is not there to be found, Messeres Pumry¹ and Gelston² the other two persons, beside Mr McNish to whom the bond was made, they both say and affirm, they have it not, and, neither had it, where and att whom else shall we inquire

¹ Samuel Pumry, a native of Massachusetts, was a graduate of Yale in the year 1705. In 1708 he settled at Newtown, Long Island, having received a call from that people; the following year he was ordained by a Congregational council, but in 1715 he and his congregation were received into the original Presbytery. Pumry remained at Newtown until his death, in 1744.

² Samuel Gelston was an Ulster Scot who came to the colonies in 1715 and was received by the original Presbytery as a probationer. He settled at Southampton, Long Island, where he was ordained by the newly-formed Presbytery of Long Island, thereby becoming one of its original members. He served the Southampton congregation until 1728 when he joined the Presbytery of New Castle; the remainder of his ministry, never long in one place, was marked by constant conflict with presbyteries with whom he served and with the Synod of Philadelphia. In 1736, under the Presbytery of Donegal, Gelston began the organization of a church at Opequon, Virginia, but soon left the field, his work incompletd. The task was carried on the following year by another member of the Presbytery of Donegal: James Anderson.

for it? when afterwards a motion was made for another meeting for bringing and settling accounts relating to the church, because some of the number could not then stay longer, you went seemingly very much in a passion, saying it was needlesse for you to meet with us, we did not want you, if it was not to quarrell.

Now Doctor, where, in all this, is the cause of so much heat? it is observ'd by some that you can't be spoke to about the matter of that bond or these accounts & bonds wherein we all stand bound equally with your self but you are presently in a passion.

As to the 2000 lb bond, its a plain case if you have it not, or if you know nothing of it (which charity oblidges to beleive you do not, after what you have said on that score) that bond is certainly lost and gone, for upon record it is not, none of these persons above nam'd have it, and it is certain that Clark Smith, tho' I do not

[Start eighth page]

know yt ever he has said so to me yet he has said and yet sayes (and is willing to swear when called to it) some such words as Mr Black told you, what shall be done in this case? The time has been when you would not have sett so easie as you seem now to do under the tho'ts of the losse of that bond, which you had such a great hand att first in making and after wards in renewing. The time was when you would not in the least act as a representative or any thing else in the church but as a private hearer unlesse such a bond was made, out of regard to you and your asistance some of the then leading men overcame their own inclination, and yeelded to their entering into that bond before you could be prevailed upon to rejoin them; after wards upon reasons you very well know, it was made necessary to renew that bond both as to the most of the persons making, and persons to whom the bond was made; Then the church was more in debt than now it is, then you had Launch'd out, att least, most of the mony by you att all Laid out on the churches account before your receipt of the churches money from great Brittain, then you had no such thing as the security of a mortgage, but yet you was very forward & zealous for renewing that bond, now there seems to be in you a remissnesse indifference and carlessness about the being or not being of that bond, now you seem to decline any words about it unlesse it be when you are pleas'd to make use of its

name as an excuse for your not cancelling of those other bonds which by your own account are pay'd with the churches mony; now Dr what means all this; or has it no meaning? As to these above sd bonds which you refuse to cancell, are not, att least, Mr Black and Mr Inglis equally with you bound by them? as for my self etc, I do not speak, I can yet, blessed be God, trust providence with an outgate from them in his own time and way without much uneasinesse, but as to these two, have they no concern about seeing these bonds cancel'd after they are pay'd with the churches mony? ought not you to have acted in concert with them and the rest of your brethren in the paying and taking up of these bonds, but you, not only have acted altogether alone in this matter without any knowledge or presence of theirs, but when ye have taken up and pay'd these bonds mostly att least with the publick mony, (as you do not seem to disown) you plainly and expressly refuse the cancelling of them, and will not so much as allow the poor men a sight of their bonds. what the design of this is, you seem to be pritty plain and above board in acquainting, viz. that if you are payd by the church what it is in debt to you, you may have recourse on them. Now Dr do you not very well remember how these men more drill'd and Hoodwinkd some against their inclination into a compliance with your desire of their entering into these bonds? If you don't I very well do, & do also very well remember yt when I objected against the method (viz. by indemnifying one of the signers, that they by his example might be wrought to a compliance, you & Mr McKnight both told me, to satysfie me as to my scruple, that if they demanded the same indemnification which you granted to one, you would grant them the same, and this you've told oftener than once since, now after all this, for you to take the advantage of these men, by keeping their bonds pay'd with the churches mony uncancel'd, I'm affray'd this will look blek when it comes to be discovered to the view of the world, and there for any thing I can see, if you do not prevent it by cancelling them, it is like to appear in all its collours, These men, if I mistake not, are willing that you should be pay'd out of the first end of the publick churches mony all that you have expended on the church, saving only yt which relates to the mortgage, and the mortgage they look on, in the present circumstance of matters as a sufficient security for that, att least such a

security as you have before now been satisfied with, they have none at all: if you say yet what they are bound for is very inconsiderable in comparison of what you are bound & engaged for, & you are bound in these bonds as well as they, I grant it, but then what you are bound for besides these bonds, you have security for as above, and in the mean time you have the bonds uncanceled which if not in your lifetime, yet after you are gone may militate against them or theirs with all the aggravated interests and penalties. As to your being backward in meeting with your brethren about the affairs of the church about stating & adjusting accounts, as to your keeping all the books & papers relating to ye church at in [sic] your own hand, as if none were concerned in the matter but your self, I shall not now speak, having I'm afraid already wearied you with what is above, only in a few words to conclude this long Epistle; I beg you may not be offended at what I have in a plain way told you as to these things, out of sincere respect and friendship to you, I have been excited hereto by no sinister [i.e. sinister ?] selfish ends or motive, but purely by conscience, principles of equity and peace, I Tremble at ye thoughts & views of the confusion, distraction, & destruction which I again see impending & hovering over our little poor church as the consequence of these matters if not speedily prevented. pray Dr take these things into your serious sedate & impartial consideration & act therein as you may have [?] upon after reflection, and upon a dying hour, do not out of distrust of God's providence, with respect to your being paid of what you have expended in this matter, venture any thing that may have a tendency either to the wounding of your conscience, your credit or your poor little church for the setting up and supporting of which hitherto you have suffered so much, and thereby have justly acquired so much praise in the churches of Christ both here & abroad, if I am mistaken in any thing that I have said in this, I shall take it kindly to be in ye spirit of weakness corrected by you, I have chosen thus in writing to communicate my thoughts to you, among other reasons, for this one because I can rarely have ye opportunity of verbal conversation with you so long together as these matters require thus yet God may bless guide & direct you & all yours & yet his pleasure may thrive in your hands, is the sincere concluding etc of your hearty friend sincere cousin & humble servt.

Ja. Anderson

APPENDIX III.

A letter of William Steward

[Briggs also uncovered, in the WL, Vol. XXII, a letter written to Principal Stirling in 1726 by William Steward, a graduate of Glasgow, who had been received by the Synod of Philadelphia in 1718 and ordained the following year. But there is another letter from Steward in the WL, buried deep in an earlier volume: XVI, no. 84. It was written in 1723 to James Stirling, brother of Principal Stirling, and minister of the Barony Parish in Glasgow since 1699. Steward, who was pastor in Somerset County, Maryland, tells of some of the difficulties faced by a Presbyterian minister in the first years of the eighteenth-century. The note added to the letter gives us the first real evidence that he was a Scot.]

Somerset:
Augt 30. 1723.

Revd Sr,

I've received both your's last summer; the 1st Dated March 26; & the other, Aprile 12. 1722: they were very refreshing & truly acceptable to me: for which kindness, & the manifold favours I formerly received from you, I return you hearty thanks; I'm ready to have a Christian sympathy with you in all these troubles, that befall either you, or yours; & I pray God may remarkably Bless them to you.

As I've been many a time sweetly refreshed wt your prayers before now, both in publick, & private; so I begg of you, for Xt's sake, to remember me still in your devotions; for I've more need of your prayers now, yn ever I had;--

At my first coming in, I had 6 weeks of a most painfull Rheumatism over all my body. yn a continued fever for a month, & after yt above 8 moneths a 3d day fever & Agne; qch was my seasoning; & every year, about this time, I've had a very severe spell of sickness; I've been many a time, here, brought very low, & yet, Blessed be his name, he hath helped me.--

I've a double charge of 2 Congr: lying very heavy upon me, qr in are above 460 Examable persons: & from ye one corner to ye oyr, almost 40 miles;--

I'm but last week come from Virginia, qr I've been a moneth preaching to a small handfull of poor people, lately harrassed, & persecuted by a pack of profane malignants for their Religion; O! pray for them: -- Both here & there, & in sevll other parts of north-America, we are plagued wt Runnegados, Rebels, Turncoats, & Graceless Ruffians; Godless priests of the church of England, a Scandall to Religion, Burdens to ye [h]eart, & ye disgrace of mankind; & quis talia fando tempereta, Lachrimis. My kind respects to you, & all yours; I am,

Revd Sr., Your sincere freind, & weak
Fellow Labourer, in our common master's work--
William Steward

P.S. Sr with your next, please send me your Best advise, & counsell.

[There follows a note, written for the information of Robert Wodrow. James Stirling made the addition before sending the letter to Wodrow, for his collections.]

[William Steward] who is minr. in Mary Land was my praecentor some years in the Barronie Church, a good youngman.

APPENDIX IV.

An index of Volume XXII of the Wodrow Letters

[The letters written to Robert Wodrow (plus a number written to others, which were given to him) were bound by Wodrow into twenty-two separate volumes. Before he died, Wodrow indexed all but the final volume. The entire collection has been in the possession of the Advocates' Library (now the National Library of Scotland) for many years; but the final volume had never been catalogued, thus forcing researchers to look through each of the 124 items to gain any knowledge of their contents. Further, none of the letters in this volume were printed by the Wodrow Society in their three-volumed collection.

[The author has presented a copy of this index to the Manuscript Department of the National Library; perhaps it will be of some assistance to future students who desire to make use of these valuable manuscript letters in historical research. The great bulk of the material deals with the subscription controversy in the Presbyterian Church in Ulster. The letters touching on early American Presbyterianism have been used extensively by Charles A. Briggs and the present writer. The three letters from Christoph Henrie Karkettell deal somewhat with the Reformed Church in Poland and Lithuania.

[The numbering of the letters follows the one used in binding; most of the manuscripts have a number in ink either on front or overleaf, but occasionally this is faulty, a number or two being skipped. The original numbering is followed throughout in order to facilitate the location of the documents; in any case, they are listed here in the exact order in which they are bound.

[While an attempt has been made to give the author, the place from which the letter was written, to whom the letter was written, and the date of writing in each case, omissions in the letters themselves occasionally force us to leave in question such information. Most of the correspondence is addressed to Wodrow, himself, in which case "R.W." is the abbreviation.]

<u>No.</u>	<u>Writer</u>	<u>Written from</u>	<u>Written to</u>	<u>Date</u>
1	Duncan, Robert	Edinburgh		June 8, 1726
2	Andersone, William		R.W.	June 15, 1726
3	McCulloch, W.	Cathcart	R.W.	June 27, 1726
4	Erskine, James	Edinburgh	R.W.	June 30, 1726
5	McClaren, John	Edinburgh		August 25, 1726
6	Erskine, James	Edinburgh	R.W.	November 5, 1726
7	McClaren, John	Edinburgh	R.W.	November 16, 1726
8	McClaren, John	Edinburgh	R.W.	December 16, 1726
9	[unsigned]	Edinburgh	R.W.	February 4, 1727
10	[unsigned]	Edinburgh		February 7, 1727
11	McClaren, John	Edinburgh	R.W.	March 8, 1727
12	McCulloch, W.	Glasgow	R.W.	March 31, 1727
13	Erskine, James	London	R.W.	April 7, 1727
14	[unsigned]	London	R.W.	[received on March 17, 1727]
15	Duncan, Robert	Edinburgh	R.W.	June 10, 1727
16	Erskine, James	Edinburgh	R.W.	July 22, 1727
17	Marr, James	Murrose	R.W.	September 15, 1727
18	Spence, Nicol	Edinburgh	R.W.	September 22, 1727
19	Erskine, James	Preston	R.W.	October 30, 1727
20	[Erskine, James]	Edinburgh	R.W.	November 28, 1727
21	Drummond, _____	Edinburgh	R.W.	November 23, 1727
22	[Erskine, James]	Edinburgh	R.W.	December 19, 1727
23	Erskine, James	Edinburgh	R.W.	December 23, 1727
24	[Erskine, James]	Edinburgh	R.W.	December 25, 1727

[There is no letter numbered 25]

<u>No.</u>	<u>Writer</u>	<u>Written from</u>	<u>Written to</u>	<u>Date</u>
26	Duncan, Robert	Edinburgh	R.W.	January 17, 1728
27	[unsigned]	Edinburgh	R.W.	January 20, 1728
28	[Erskine, James]	Edinburgh	R.W.	January 25, 1728
29	[unsigned]	Edinburgh	R.W.	February 14, 1728
30	Erskine, James	Edinburgh	R.W.	February 15, 1728
31	Erskine, James	London	R.W.	May 4, 1728
32	[Baines, James]		R.W.	February 6, 1728
33	[Erskine, James]	Edinburgh	R.W.	April 9, 1728
34	[Erskine], J[ames]	Edinburgh	R.W.	April 4, 1728
35	[Erskine], J[ames]	Edinburgh	R.W.	April 11, 1728
36	Undas, John	Edinburgh [?]	R.W.	August 20, 1728
37	[unsigned]	Edinburgh	R.W.	August 23, 1728
38	[unsigned]	Culross	R.W.	January 6, 1729
39	Undas, John	Edinburgh [?]	R.W.	February 13, 1729
40	Baines, James	Bonhille	R.W.	February 21, 1729
41	[unsigned]	Edinburgh	R.W.	March 22, 1729
42	Cross, Hugh	Bervan	R.W.	April 18, 1729
43	Scupal, S. [?]		R.W.	May 10, 1729
44	Horsman, James	London	R.W.	April 15, 1726
45	Fraser, James	London	R.W.	July 7, 1726
46	Karkettell, C.H.	Gravesend	R.W.	December 6, 1726
47	Evans, J.	Deale	R.W.	June 18, 1728
48	[unsigned]	London	R.W.	November 2, 1728
49	Fraser, James	London	R.W.	November 5, 1728
50	Evans, J.	Deale	R.W.	November 29, 1728

[There is no letter numbered 51]

<u>No.</u>	<u>Writer</u>	<u>Written from</u>	<u>Written to</u>	<u>Date</u>
52	[unsigned]	London	R.W.	April 26, 1729
53	[Erskine, James]	London	R.W.	April 29, 1729
54	Newman, Henry	London	John Stirling	November 20, 1708
55	Newman, Henry	London	John Stirling	December 28, 1708
56	Newman, Henry	London	John Stirling	April 12, 1709
57	Newman, Henry	London	John Stirling	October 22, 1709
58	Newman, Henry	London	John Stirling	April 8, 1710
59	Newman, Henry	London	John Stirling	April 11, 1713
60	Newman, Henry	London	John Stirling	November 9, 1721
61	Newman, Henry	London	John Stirling	October, 1722
62	Newman, Henry	London	John Stirling	March 21, 1722/3
63	Newman, Henry	Middle Temple	John Stirling	May 26, 1724
64	Newman, Henry	Middle Temple	John Stirling	October 30, 1725
65	Newman, Henry	Middle Temple	John Stirling	September 2, 1727
66	Newman, Henry	Middle Temple	R.W.	April 20, 1728
67	Newman, Henry	London	R.W.	December 19, 1727
68	Newman, Henry	London		September 17, 1728
69	Livingstone, W.	Templepatrick	R.W.	April 21, 1726
70	Smith, Samuel	Belfast		June 24, 1726
71	[unsigned]	Irvine		June 29, 1726
72	[an unsigned extract from the minutes of the General Synod of Ulster, June 28, 1726]			
73	[unsigned]	Belfast		July 1, 1726
74				August 3, 1726
75	M[astertown], C[hables]	Belfast		July 6, 1726
76	McBride, Robert	Belfast	R.W.	September 9, 1726
77	Mastertown, Charles	Belfast	R.W.	September 9, 1726

<u>No.</u>	<u>Writer</u>	<u>Written from</u>	<u>Written to</u>	<u>Date</u>
78	McKnaight, William	Irvine	R.W.	November 11, 1726
79	McBride, Robert	Ballymony	R.W.	November 17, 1726
80	McBride, Robert	Ballymony	R.W.	November 30, 1726
81	McBride and McKnaight	Ballymony and Irvine	R.W.	November 7, 1726 & January 25, 1727
82	Livingstone, W.	Templepatrick		January 17, 1726
83	McKnaight, William	Irvine	R.W.	February 3, 1727
84	[unsigned]	Belfast		January 18 & 25, 1726/7
[There is no letter numbered 85]				
86	Livingstone, W.	Templepatrick		February 20, 1727
87	McBride, Robert	Ballymony	R.W.	April 16, 1727
88	Biggart, Will	Bangor	David Holm	April 9, 1727
89	McKnight, William and M[astertown], C[hables]	Irvine and Belfast	R.W.	May 22 & April 28, 1727
90	[unsigned]	Belfast		June 27, 1727
91	McKnaight, William	Irvine	R.W.	July 7, 1727
92	Mastertown, Charles	Belfast	R.W.	August 18, 1727
93	Livingstone, W.	Templepatrick	R.W.	September 15, 1727
94	M[astertown], C[hables] and [McKnaight, William]	Belfast and Irvine	R.W.	December 29, 1727 & January 10, 1728
95	[McKnaight, William] and M[astertown], C[hables]	Irvine and Belfast	R.W.	January 29 & 19, 1728
96	McBride, Robert	Ballymony	R.W.	March 23, 1728
97	McBride, Robert	Ballymony	R.W.	June 12, 1728
98	Mastertown, Charles	Belfast	R.W.	July 1, 1728
99	McK[naight], W[illiam] and [Mastertown, Charles]	Irvine and Belfast	R.W.	July 17 & 1, 1728
100	Livingstone, W.	Templepatrick	R.W.	July 9, 1728
101	Kennedy, Gilbert	Tullylish	Robert Miller, R.W., D. Turner	August 8, 1728
102	[McKnaight, William] and [Mastertown, Charles]	[Irvine] and Belfast	R.W.	August 19 & 10, 1728

<u>No.</u>	<u>Writer</u>	<u>Written from</u>	<u>Written to</u>	<u>Date</u>
103	McKnaight, William and Mastertown, Charles	Irvine and Belfast	R.W.	October 9 & September 2, 1728
104	Mastertown, Charles	Belfast		October 10, 1728
105	McBride, Robert		R.W.	November 11, 1728
106	[Mastertown, Charles]		R.W.	December 9, 1728
107	Stuart, James	Kirkdonald	R.W.	February 3, 1728/9
108	[McKnaight, William] and Mastertown, Charles	[Irvine] and Belfast		February 4 & March 29, 1729
109	Livingstone, W.	Templepatrick	R.W.	March 29, 1729
[There are no letters numbered 110 or 111]				
112	Erskine, John	Rotterdam	R.W.	_____ 17, 1728
[none]	Erskine, John	Edinburgh	R.W.	February 7, 1727
113	Karkettle, Ch. Henry	London		February 1, 1728
114	Karkettell, Christoph: Henrie	Leyden	R.W.	September 9, 1728
115	Anderson, James	New Castle upon Delaware	John Stirling	August 1, 1716
116	Anderson, James	New Castle upon Delaware	John Stirling	August 8, 1717
117	Anderson, James	New York City	John Stirling	December 3, 1717
118	McNish, George	Jamaica, Long Island	John Stirling	November 15, 1718
119	Anderson, James	New Castle upon Delaware	John Stirling	July 13, 1719
120	Gillespie, George	Head of Christ- iana Creek, 12 miles west of New Castle, Penna.	John Stirling	July 16, 1723
121	Anderson, James	New York City	John Stirling	November 25, 1723
122	Huchison, Alexander	Maryland	John Stirling	July, 1724
122 [b]	Steward, William	Sommerset, Maryland	John Stirling	July 9, 1726
123	Anderson, James	New York City	John Stirling	October 29, 1725
123B.	"A representation of the Case betwix the presbyterian church of New York & Dr Nicoll, as represented to the Revd presbytery hold att Jamaica on Long Island May 18th [1726] by ye Representatives of Sd Church"			
123bB	Anderson, James	New York City	John Stirling	July 4, 1726
124	Maxwell, William	Charlestown, S.C.	John Stirling	April 26, 1726

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2. Synods

3. General Assemblies

B. Additional primary sources

II. SECONDARY SOURCES

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III. CARTOGRAPHICAL SOURCES

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BrM	The British Museum, London
CUL	Cambridge University Library
EUL	Edinburgh University Library
GUL	Glasgow University Library
HF	The Historical Foundation of the Presbyterian and Reformed Churches, Montreat, North Carolina
NCL	New College Library, University of Edinburgh
NLS	The National Library of Scotland, Edinburgh
OSU	Ohio State University Library
P	Personal copy
PHS	The Presbyterian Historical Society, Philadelphia
PHSE	The Presbyterian Historical Society of England, London
PLR	Parish Library, Presbyterian Church, Ramelton, Ireland
QUL	Queen's University Library, Belfast
R	Rhodes House, Oxford
RH	The Register House, Edinburgh
TCD	Trinity College Library, Dublin
TTC	T.&T. Clark, Publishers, Edinburgh
UTS	Union Theological Seminary Library, Richmond, Virginia
WCC	Westminster College Library, Cambridge

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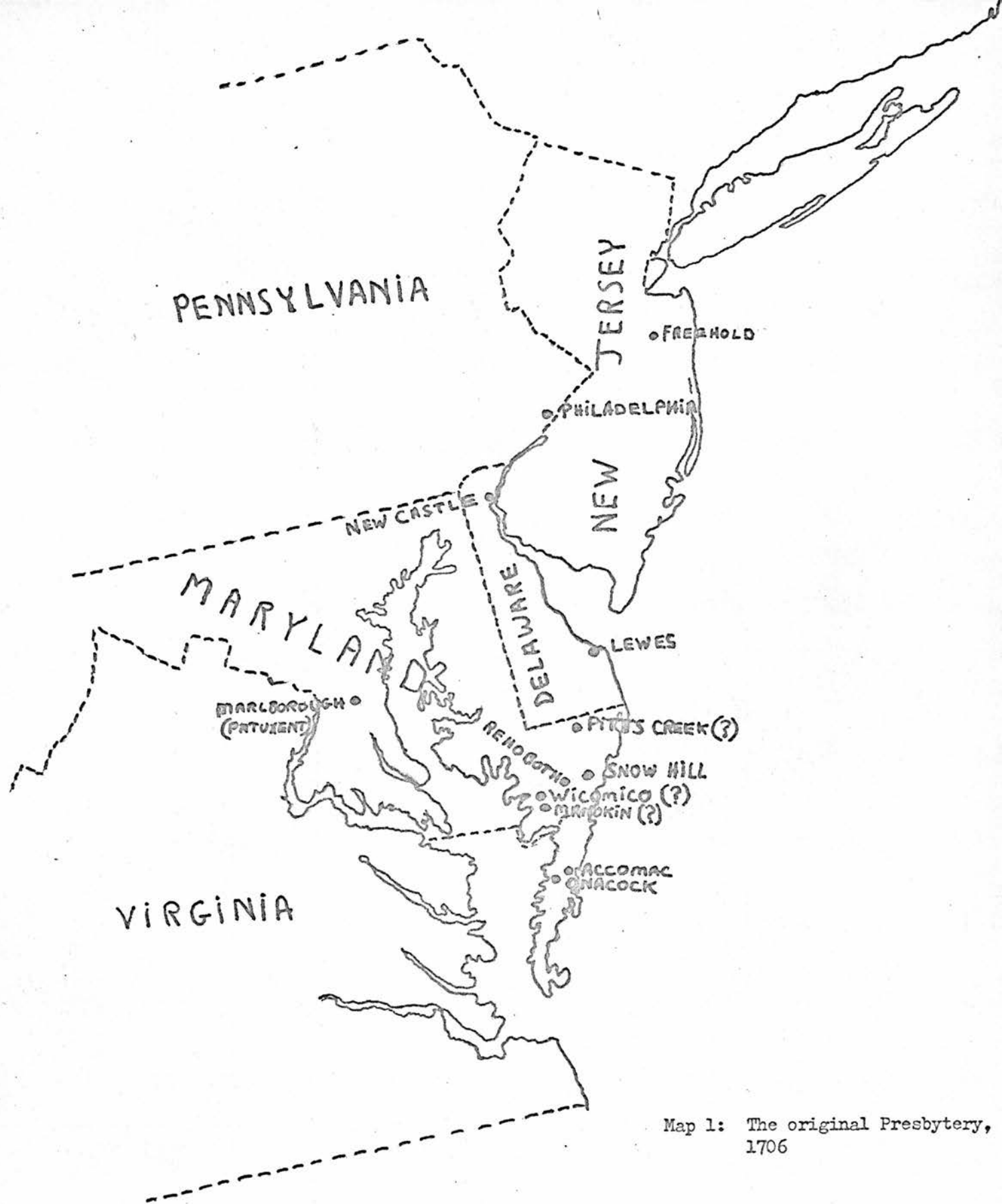
APPENDIX V.

Maps

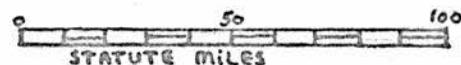
The production of these seven maps is an attempt to chart the development of the American Presbyterian Church through the changes in the boundaries of its presbyteries during the most significant periods from 1706-1788. It is believed that this is the first attempt to map the overall growth of early American Presbyterianism; in this sense, these maps are put forth as trial cartography. The boundaries rarely were specified, and therefore they have been arrived at through the location of congregations, both settled and vacant, as listed in the minutes of the judicatories.

The first map simply locates the churches related to the original Presbytery at its inception; this includes the Freehold, New Jersey congregation, where John Boyd was ordained in December of 1706. In the subsequent maps there has been an attempt to list most or all of the settled congregations. Since this would have been impossible with the final map, only several of the more important cities are listed. Throughout, the listing of congregations has been incidental to the main purpose: the areas covered by the respective presbyteries.

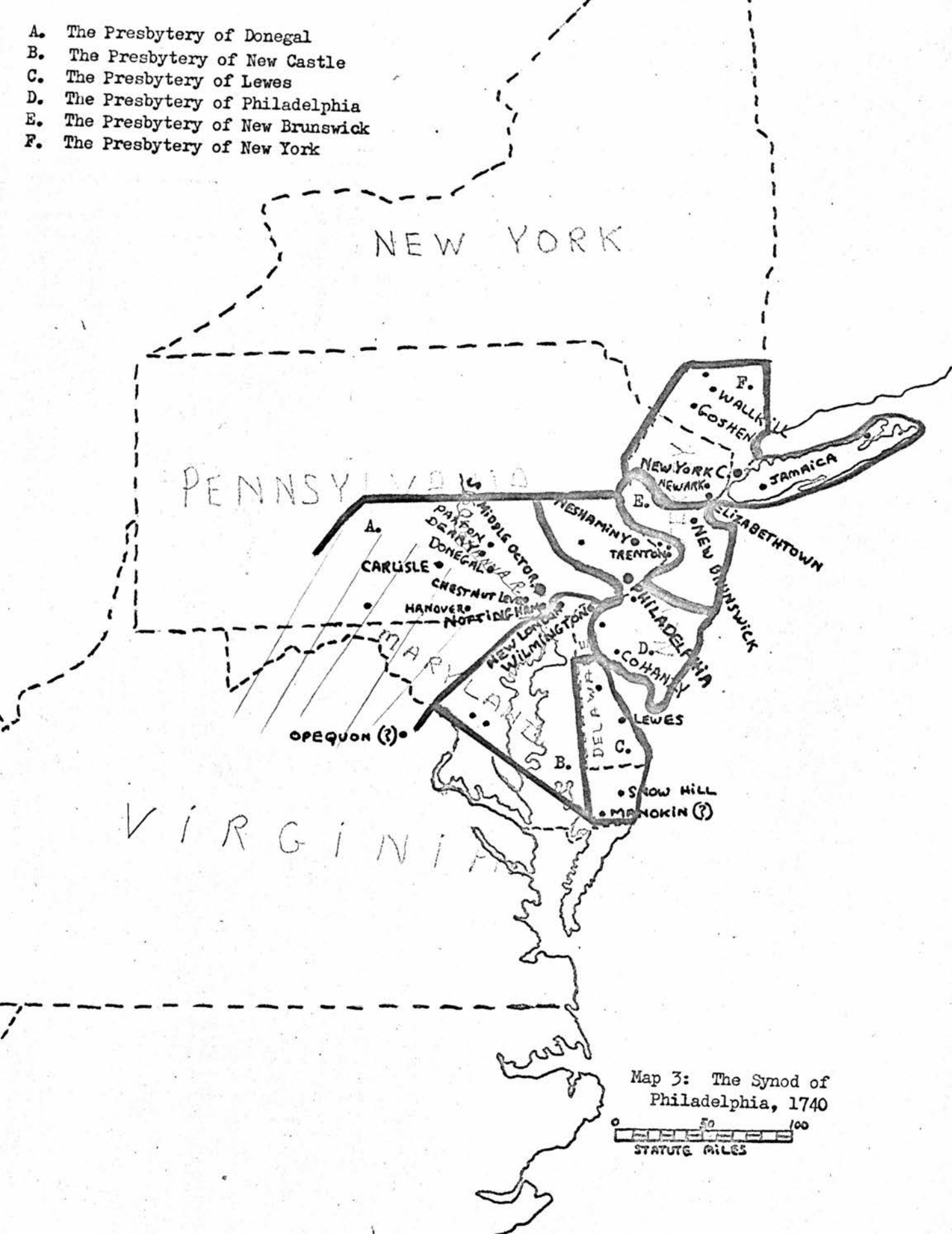
It is hoped that these maps may serve as aids to accompany the text, showing the church's conscious attempts so to structure its government that it might effectively order the Christian life within its bounds.



Map 1: The original Presbytery, 1706



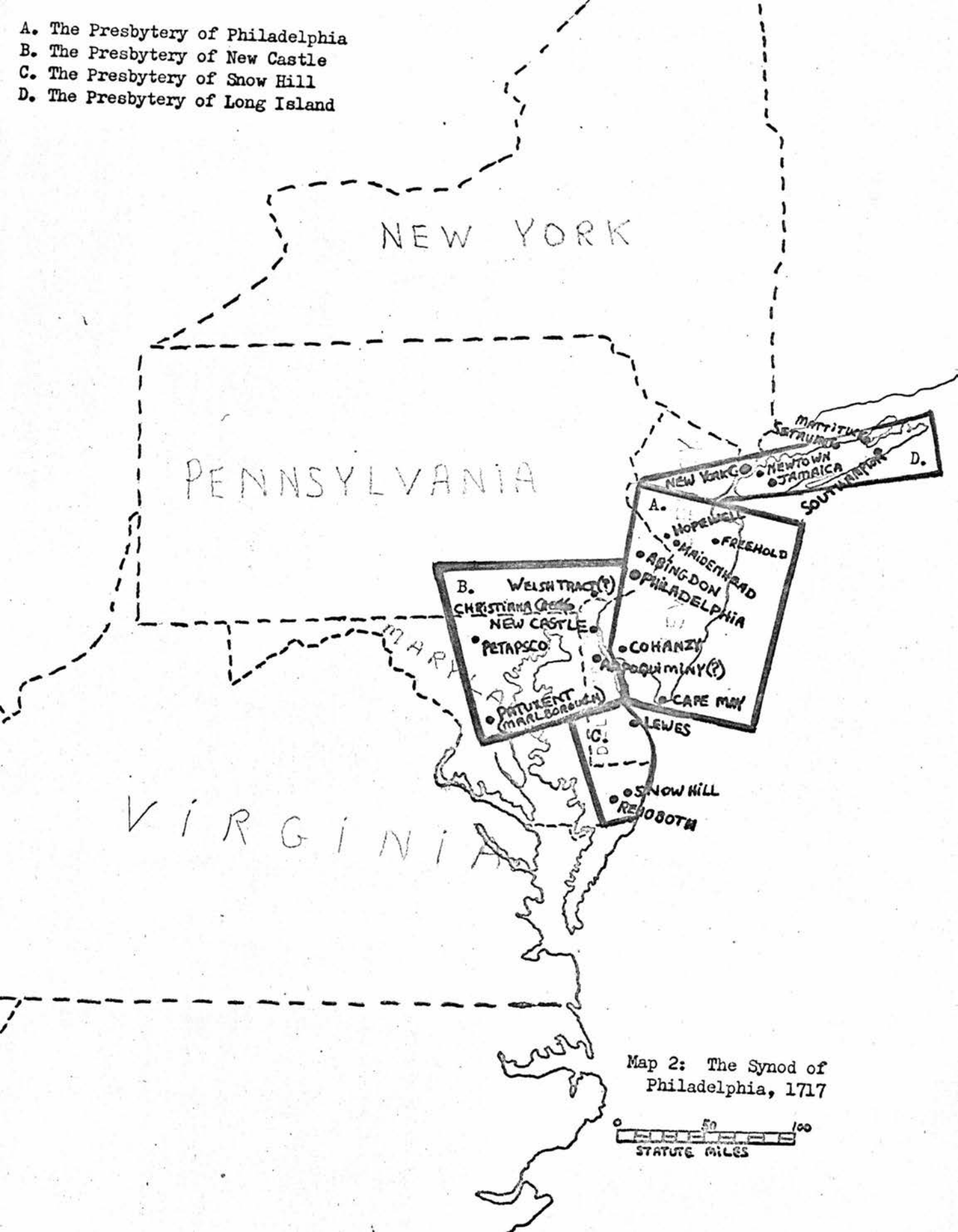
- A. The Presbytery of Donegal
- B. The Presbytery of New Castle
- C. The Presbytery of Lewes
- D. The Presbytery of Philadelphia
- E. The Presbytery of New Brunswick
- F. The Presbytery of New York



Map 3: The Synod of Philadelphia, 1740

0 50 100
STATUTE MILES

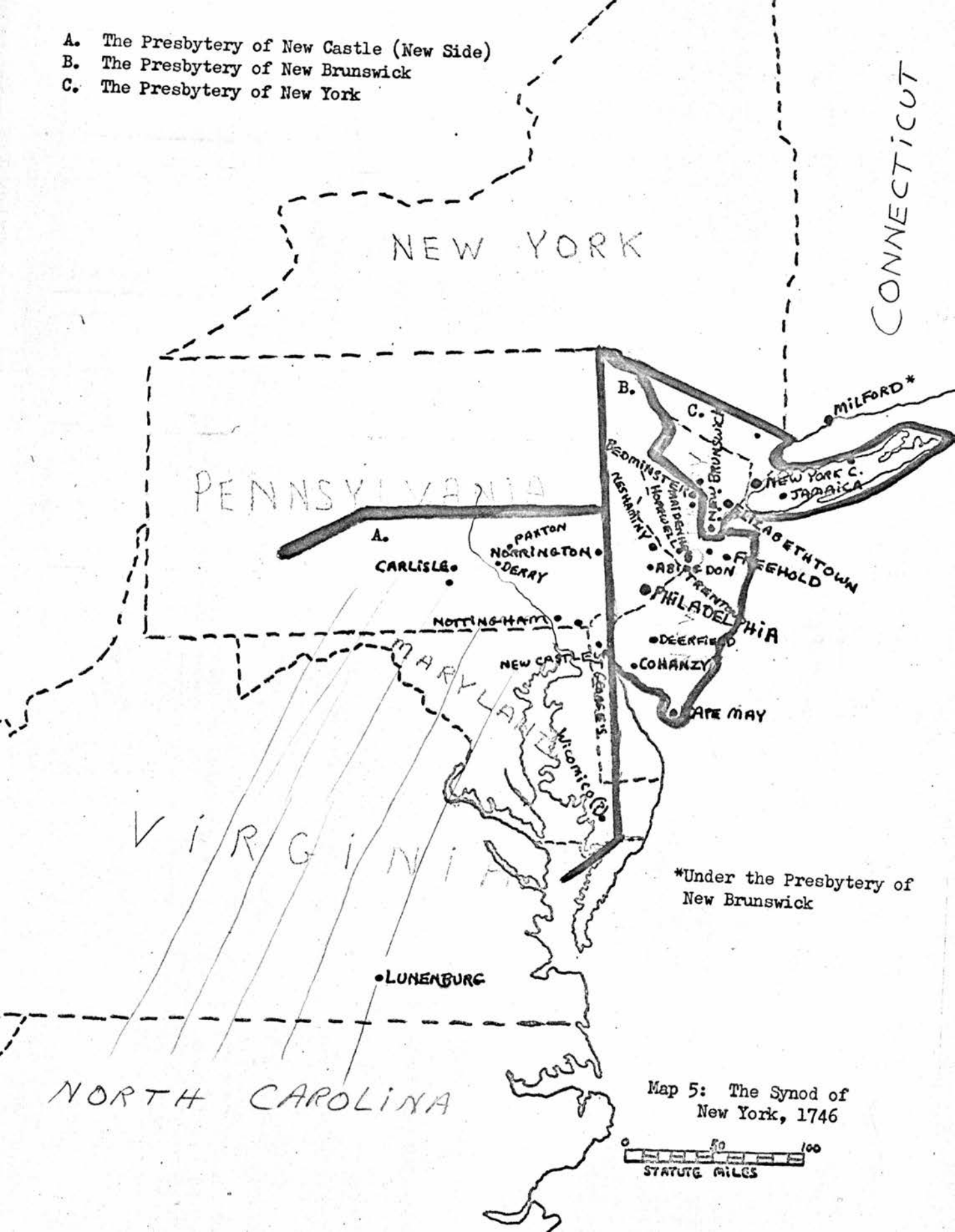
- A. The Presbytery of Philadelphia
- B. The Presbytery of New Castle
- C. The Presbytery of Snow Hill
- D. The Presbytery of Long Island



Map 2: The Synod of Philadelphia, 1717

0 50 100
STATUTE MILES

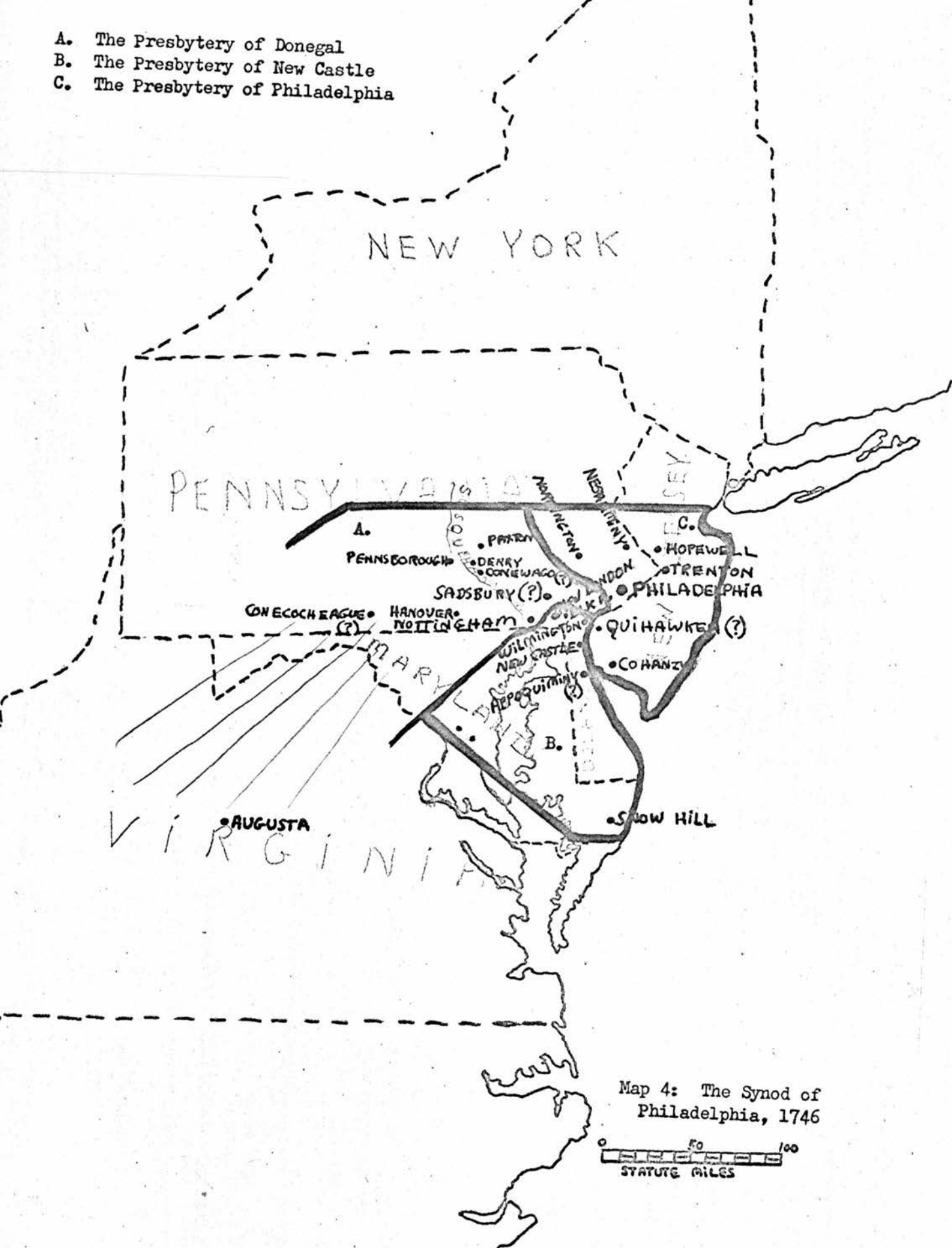
- A. The Presbytery of New Castle (New Side)
- B. The Presbytery of New Brunswick
- C. The Presbytery of New York



*Under the Presbytery of New Brunswick

Map 5: The Synod of New York, 1746

- A. The Presbytery of Donegal
- B. The Presbytery of New Castle
- C. The Presbytery of Philadelphia



Map 4: The Synod of
Philadelphia, 1746

0 50 100
STATUTE MILES

The Synod of New York and New Jersey

- A. The Presbytery of Suffolk
- B. The Presbytery of Dutchess County
- C. The Presbytery of New York
- D. The Presbytery of New Brunswick

The Synod of Philadelphia

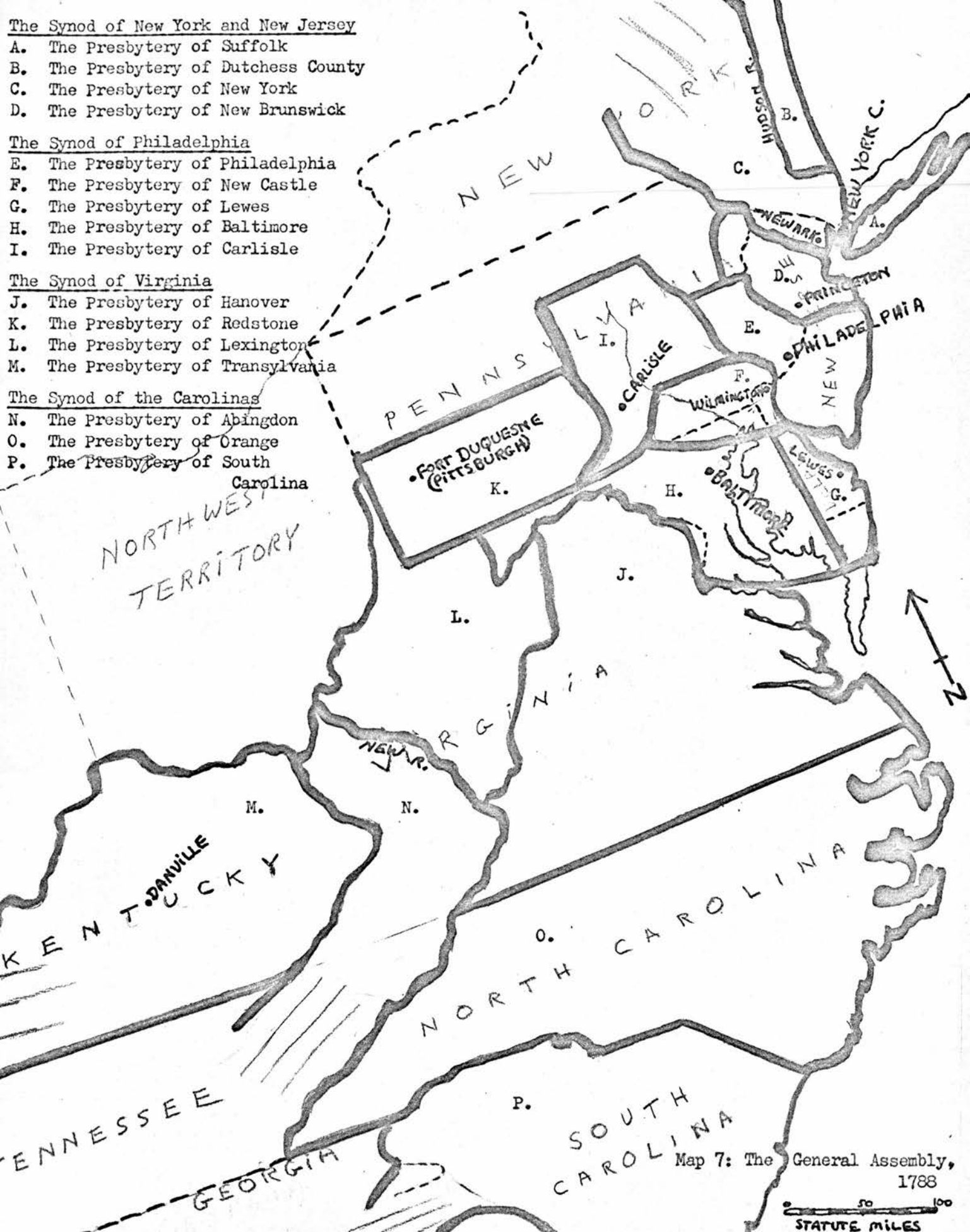
- E. The Presbytery of Philadelphia
- F. The Presbytery of New Castle
- G. The Presbytery of Lewes
- H. The Presbytery of Baltimore
- I. The Presbytery of Carlisle

The Synod of Virginia

- J. The Presbytery of Hanover
- K. The Presbytery of Redstone
- L. The Presbytery of Lexington
- M. The Presbytery of Transylvania

The Synod of the Carolinas

- N. The Presbytery of Abingdon
- O. The Presbytery of Orange
- P. The Presbytery of South Carolina



- A. The Presbytery of Hanover
- B. The Presbytery of Donegal
- C. The Presbytery of New Castle
- D. The Presbytery of Lewis
- E. The Presbytery of Philadelphia
- F. The Presbytery of New Brunswick
- G. The Presbytery of New York
- H. The Presbytery of Suffolk

